MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

マルドゥック・スクランブル

1

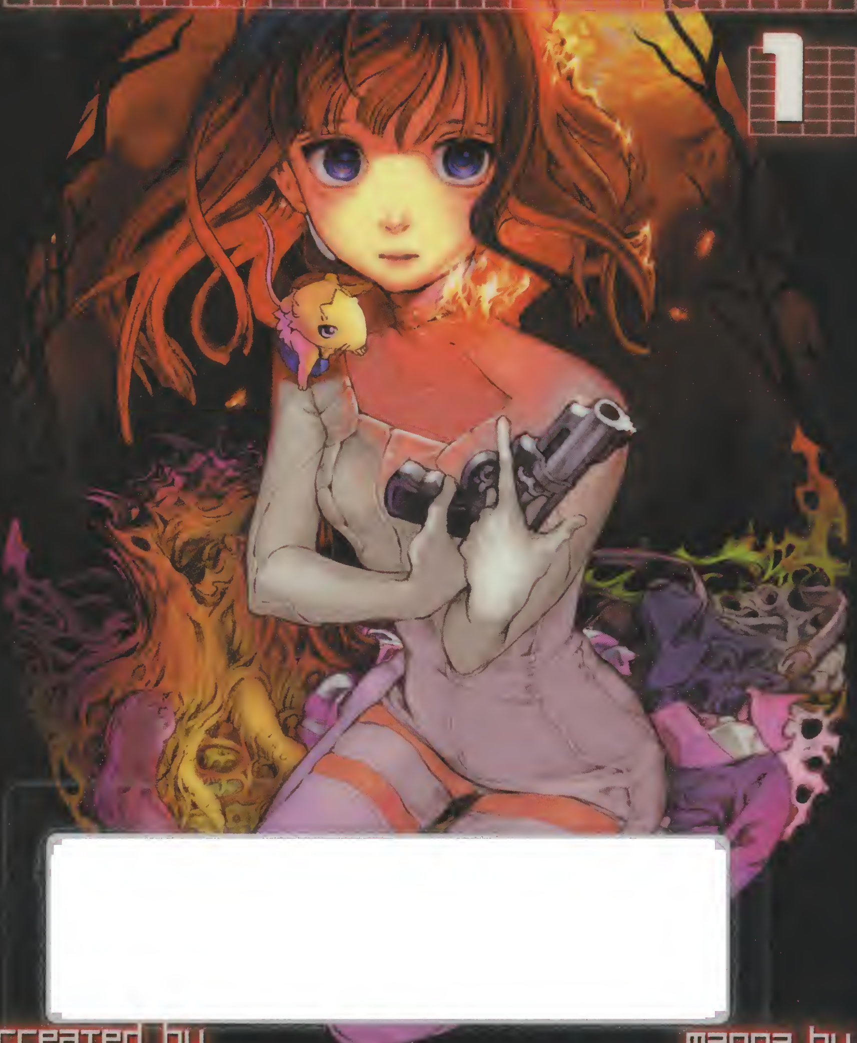
created by
TOW UBUKATA

manga by
YOSHITOKI OIMA

MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

マルドゥック・スクランブル

1



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a LIFE worth LIVING...

"I'd rather be dead." Rune Balot was a lost girl with nothing to live for, when a man named Shell took her in and cared for her...until he tried to murder her. Standing at the precipice of death, Rune is saved by Dr. Easter, a private investigator, who uses an experimental procedure known as "Mardock Scramble 09." The procedure grants Balot extraordinary abilities and now Rune must decide whether to use her new powers to help Dr. Easter bring Shell to justice, or if she even has the will to keep living a life that's been broken so badly.

Includes special extras after the story!

a LIFE worth LIVING...

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a LIFE worth LIVING...

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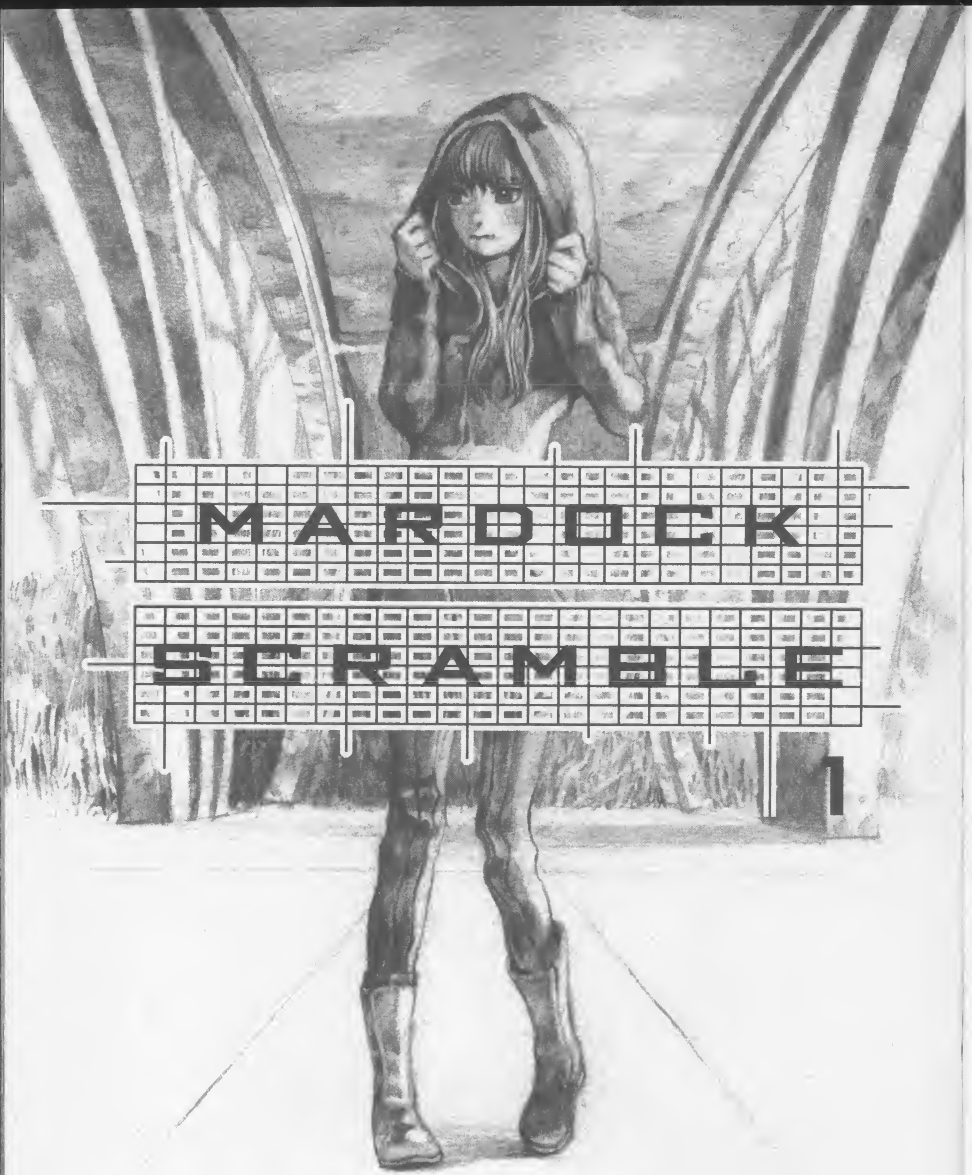

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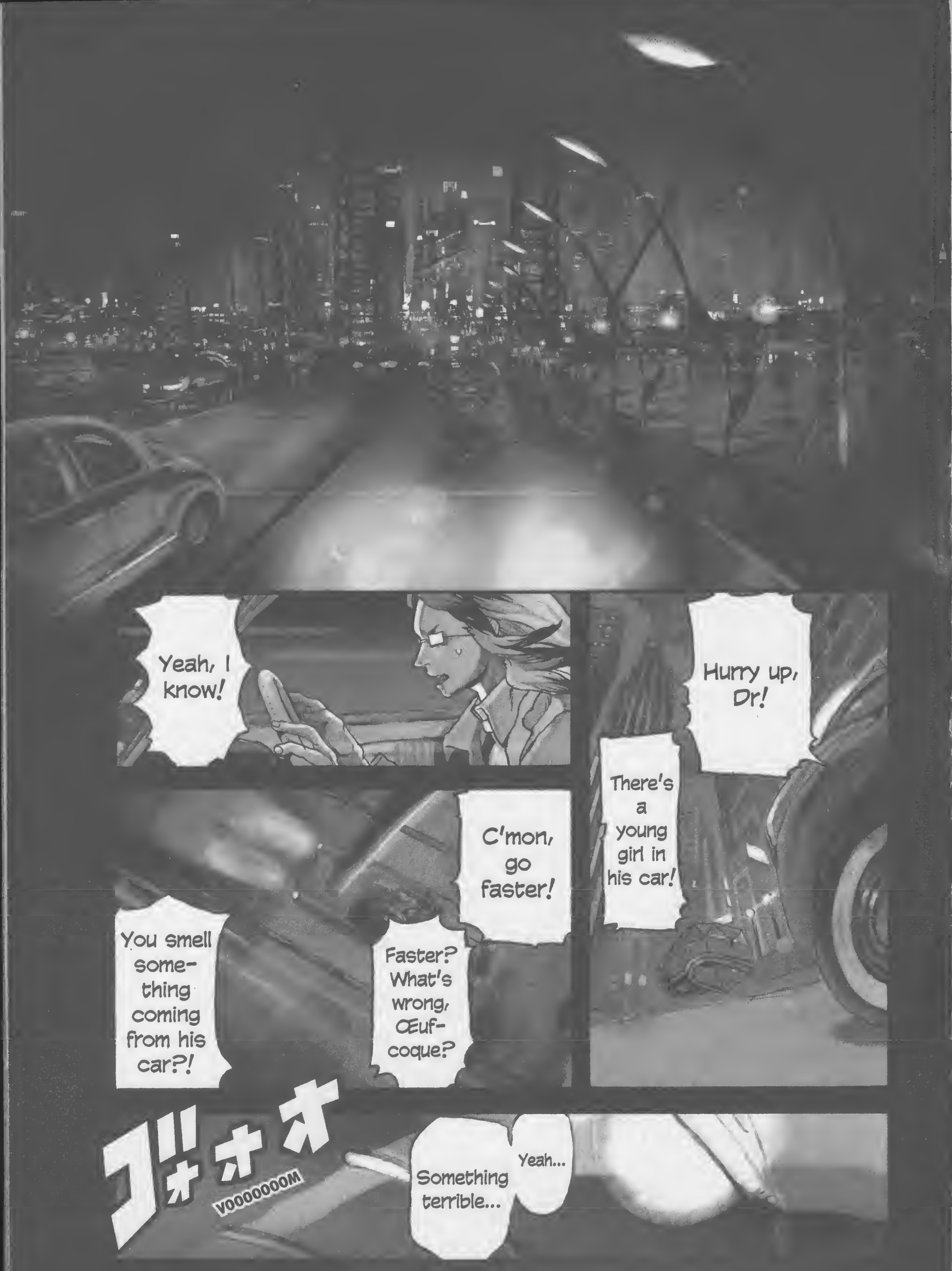
Hurry up, Dr!
There's a young girl in his car!
Yeah, I know!
C'mon, go faster!
Faster? What's wrong, Œuf-coque?
You smell something coming from his car?!
Yeah...
Something terrible...
ゴォォオ
VOOOOOOOM

The smell of malice...!!

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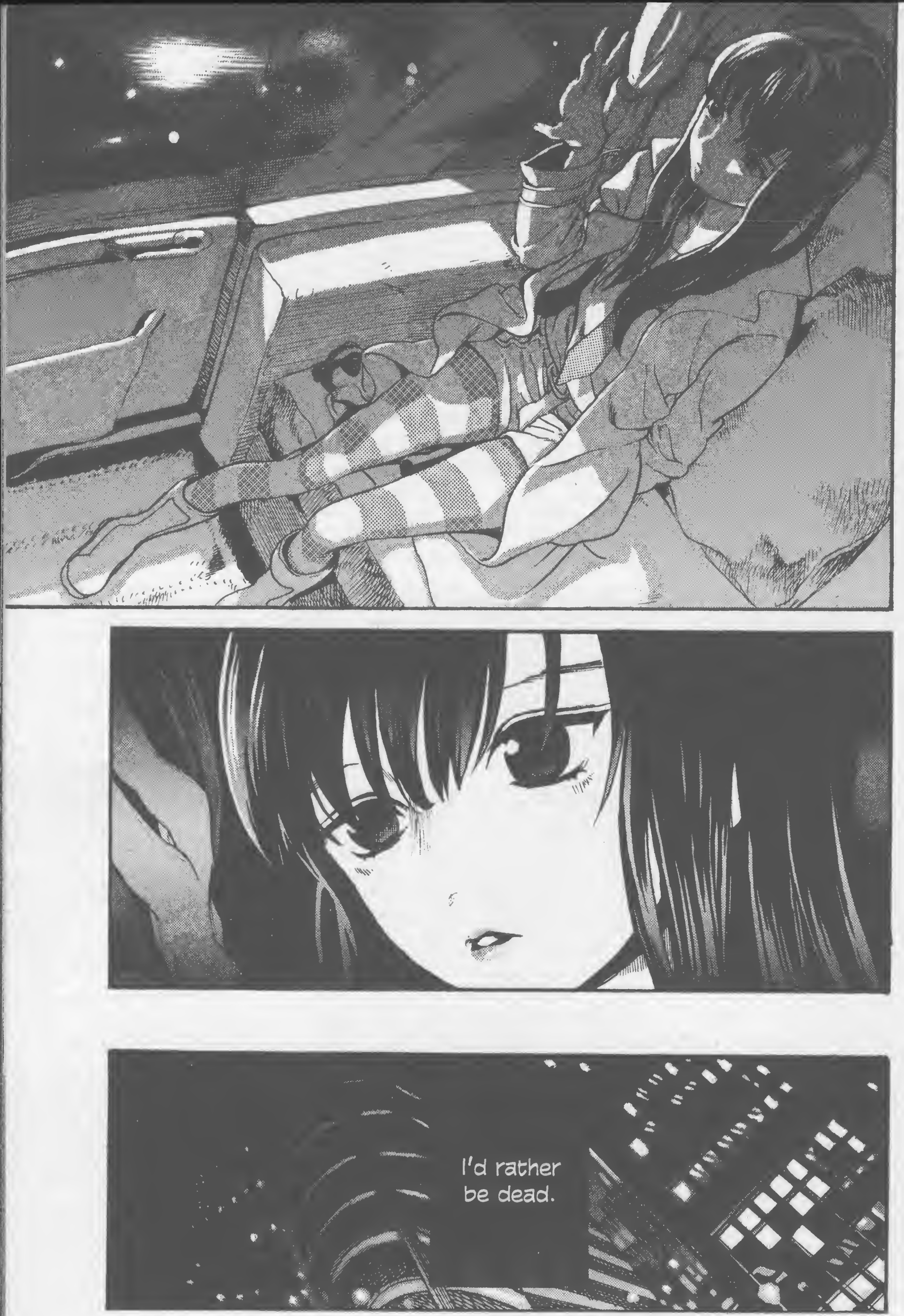
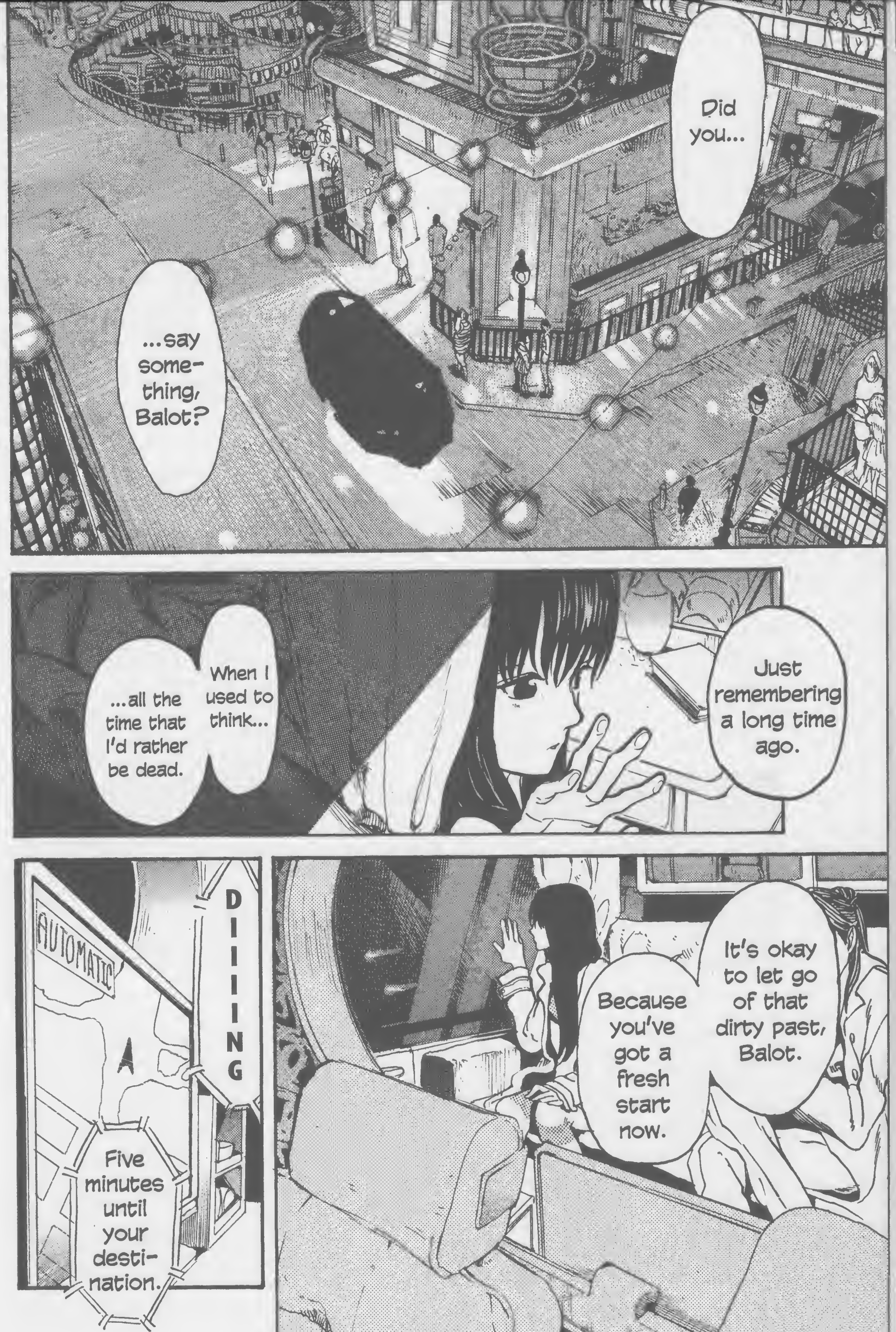
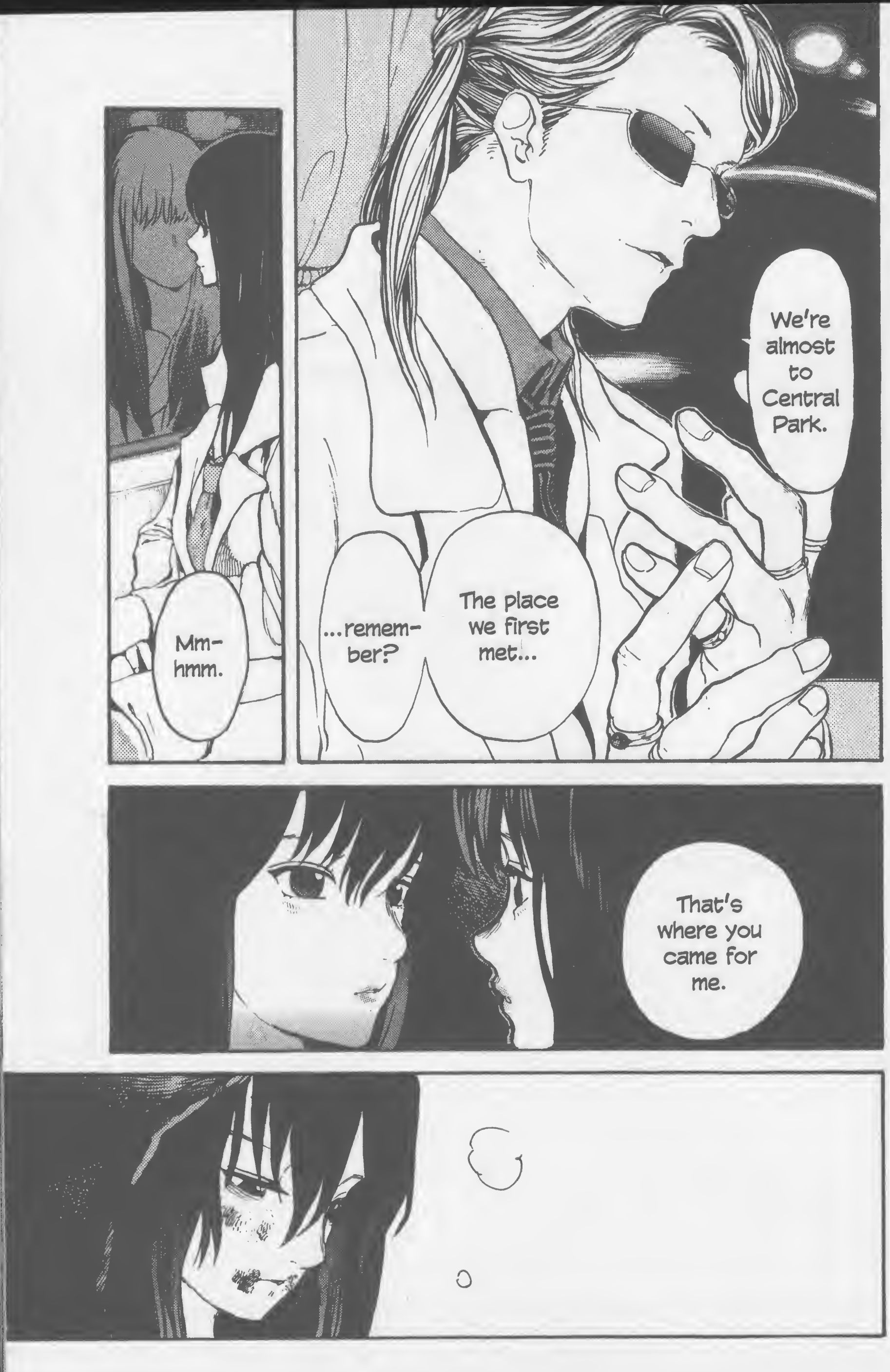


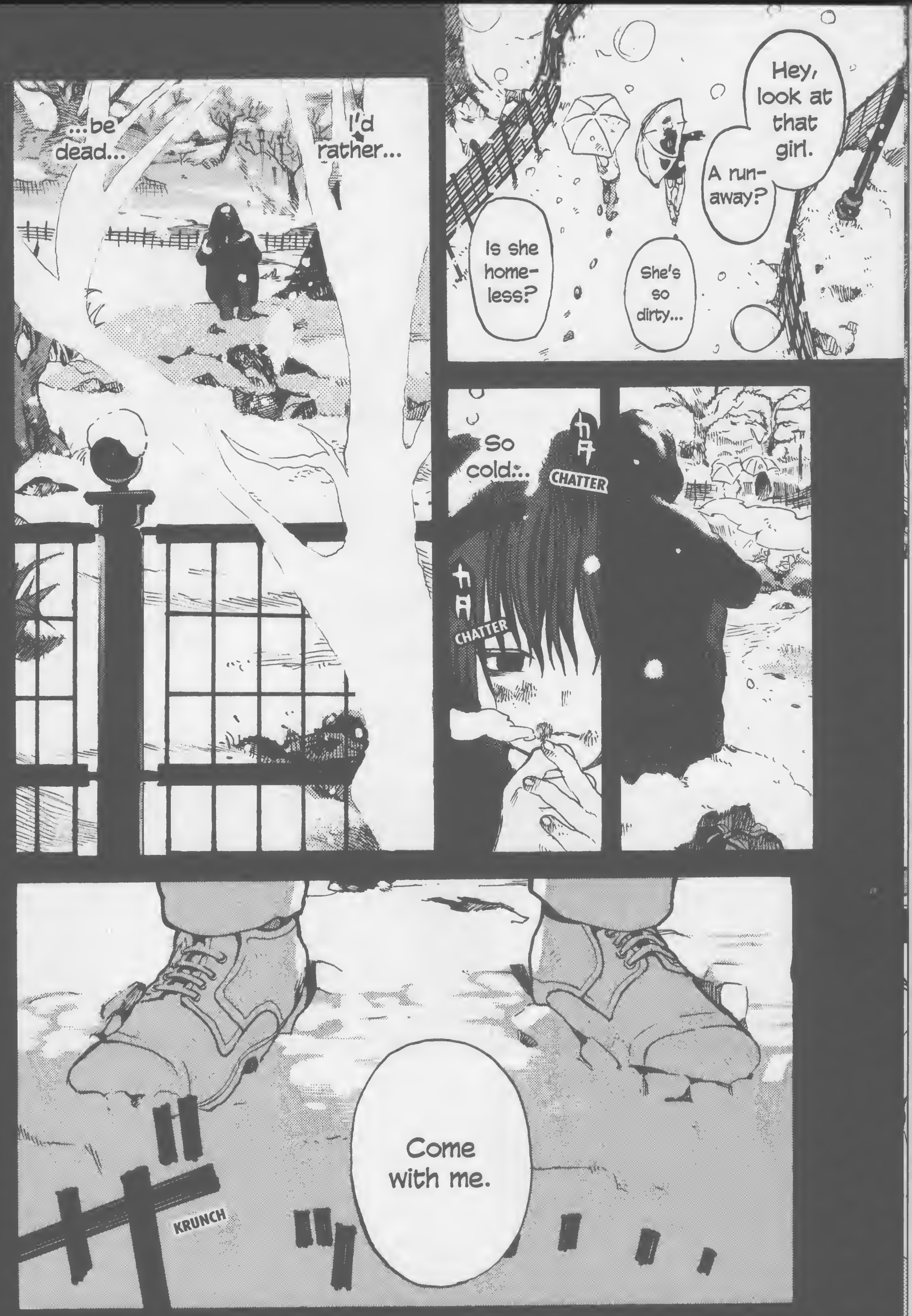
I'd rather be dead.

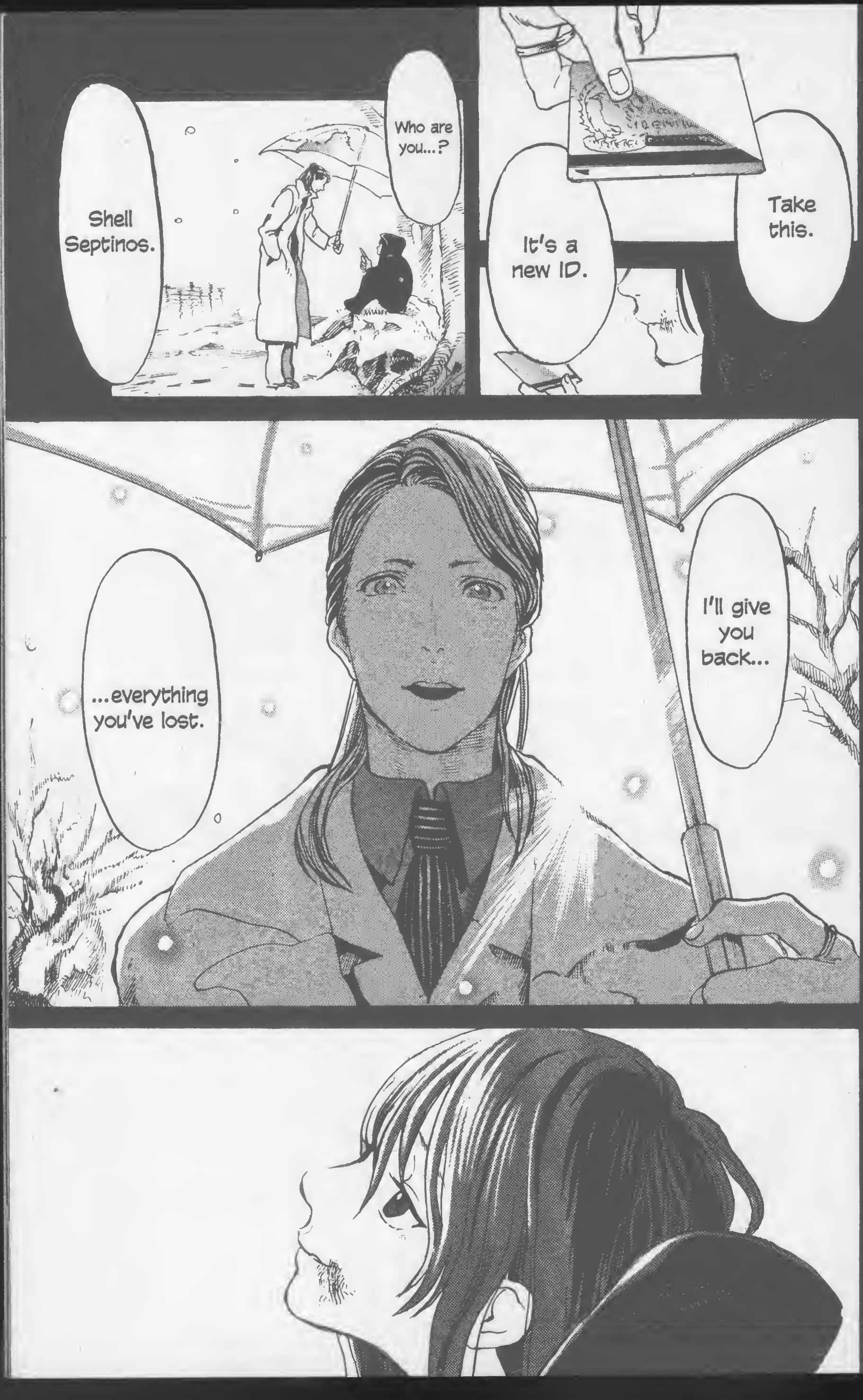
MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

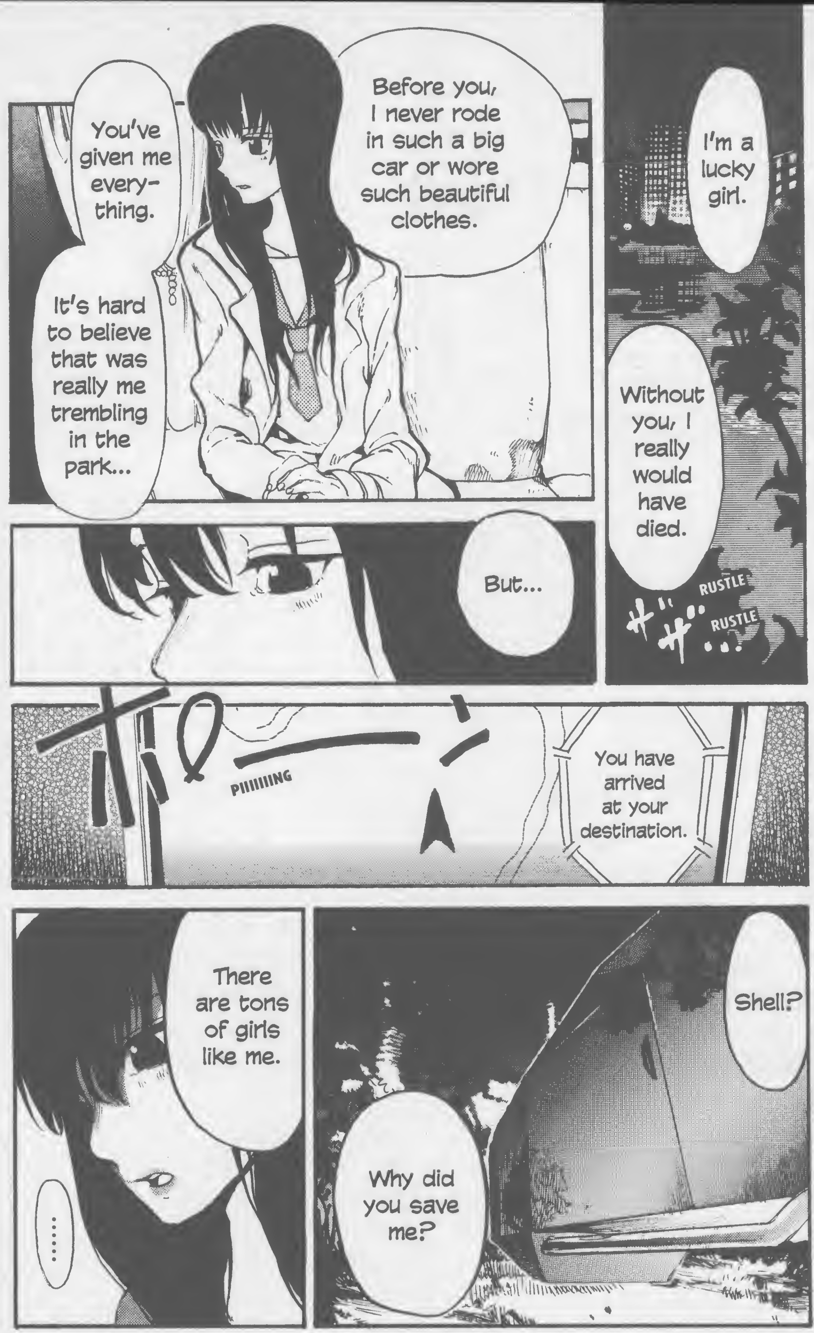
Chapter 1: Intake (1)

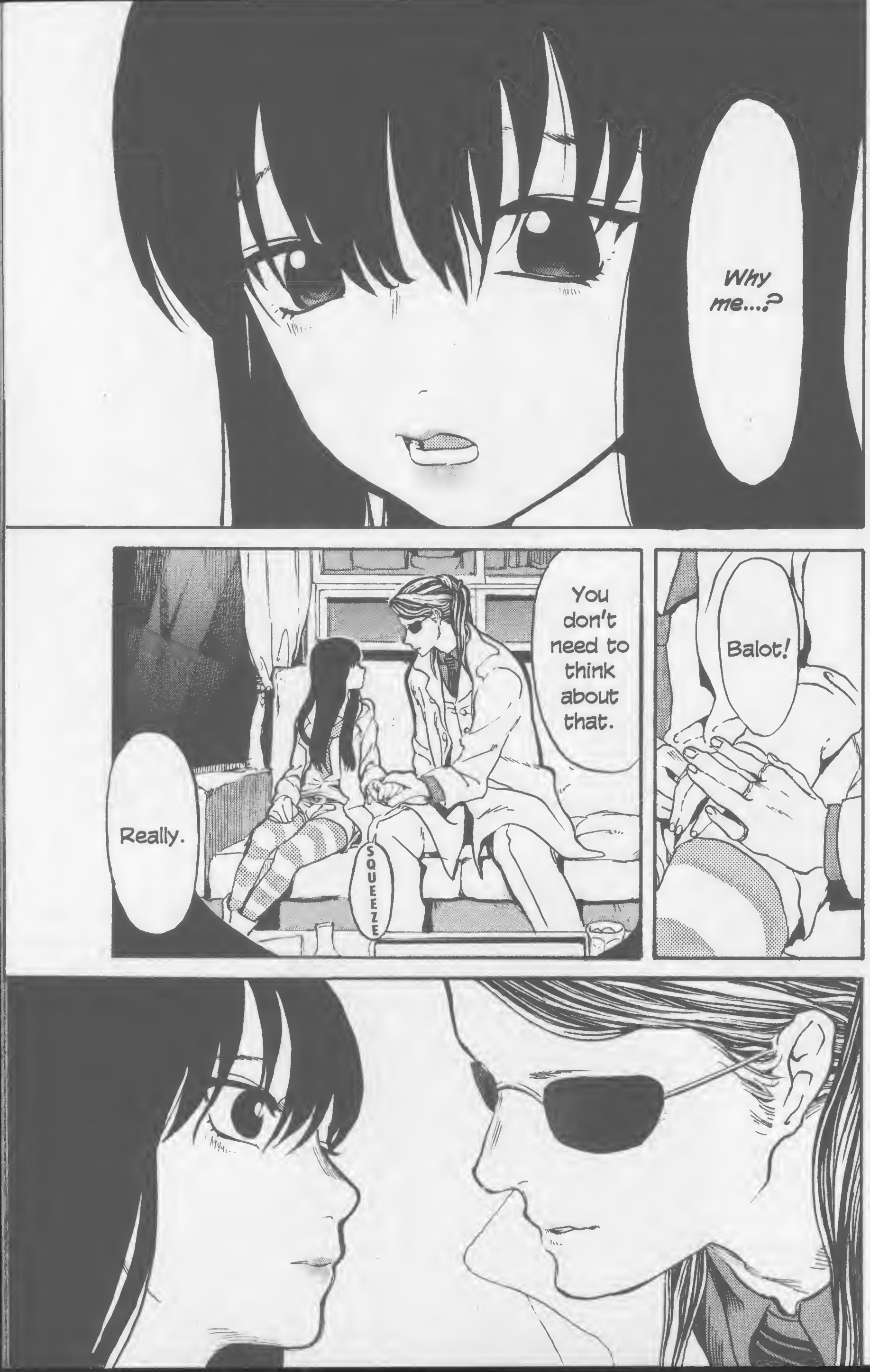

Did you...
...say something, Balot?
Just remembering a long time ago.
When I used to think...
...all the time that I'd rather be dead.
It's okay to let go of that dirty past, Balot.
Because you've got a fresh start now.
DIIING
AUTOMATIC
Five minutes until your destination.

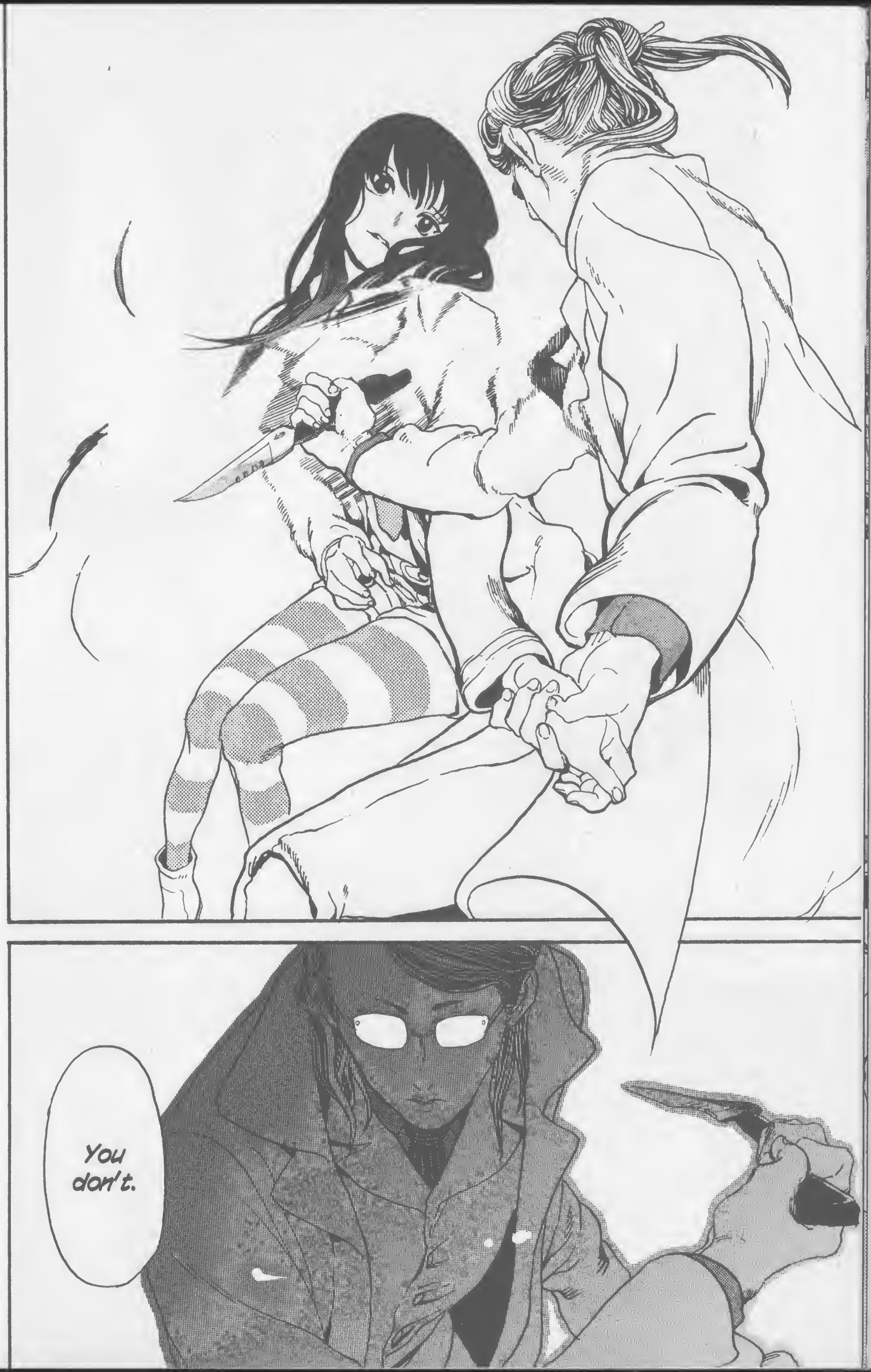

We're almost to Central Park.
The place we first met...
...remember?
Mm-hmm.
That's where you came for me.

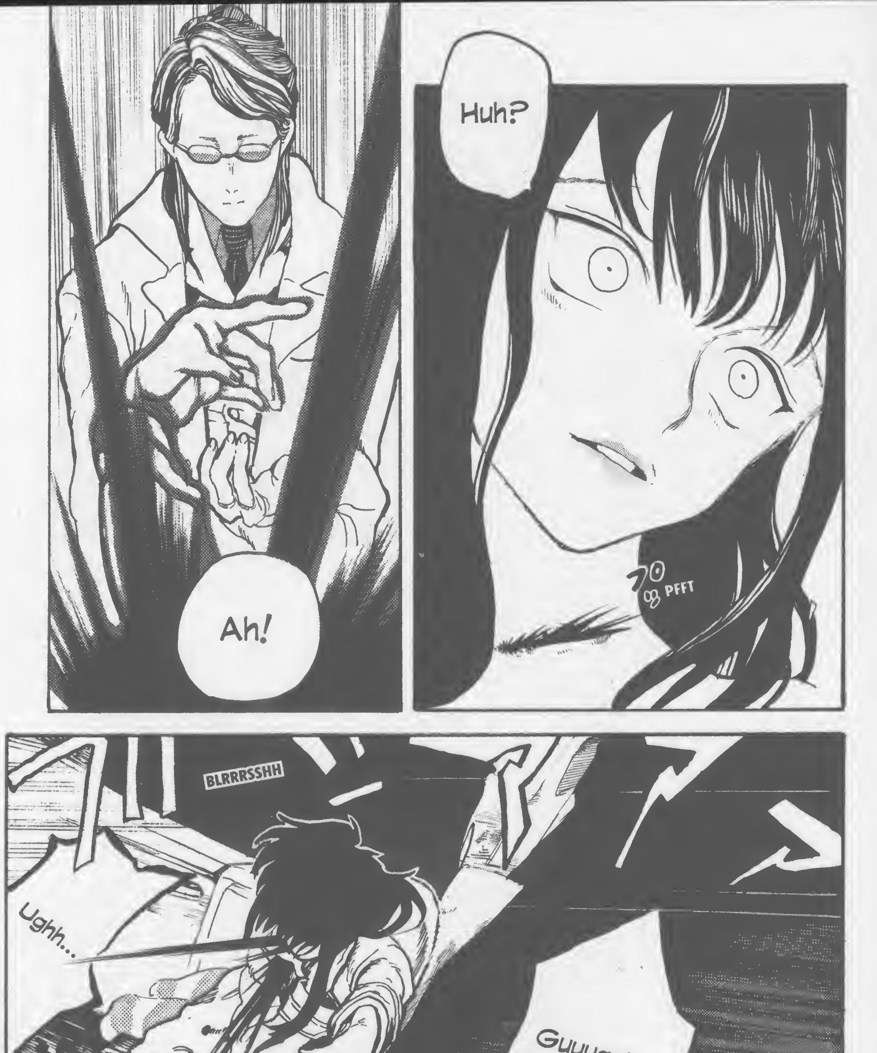

Hey, look at that girl.
A run-away?
Is she home-less?
She's so dirty...
I'd rather...
...be dead...
So cold...
カチ
CHATTER
カチ
CHATTER
Come with me.
KRUNCH

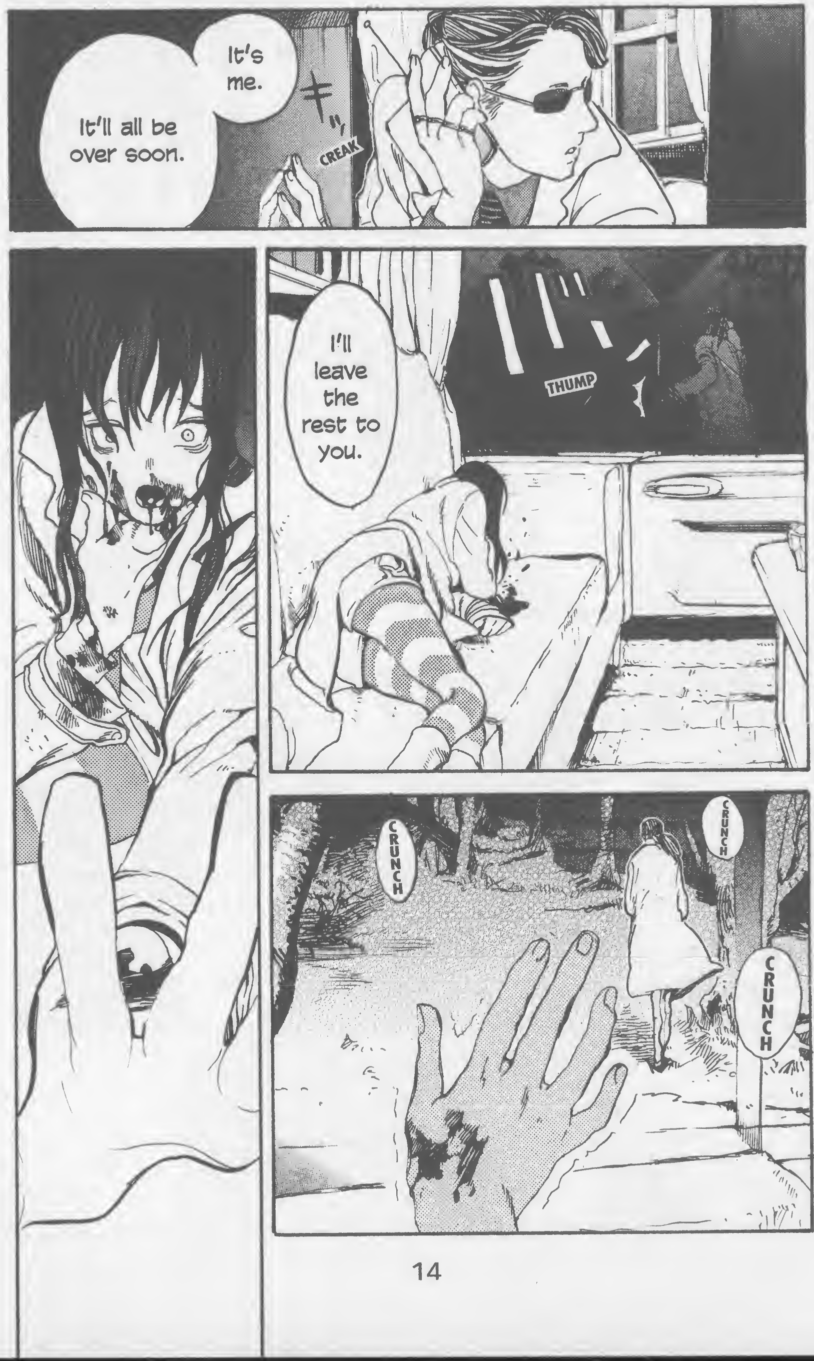

Who are you...?
Shell Septinos.
Take this.
It's a new ID.
I'll give you back...
...everything you've lost.

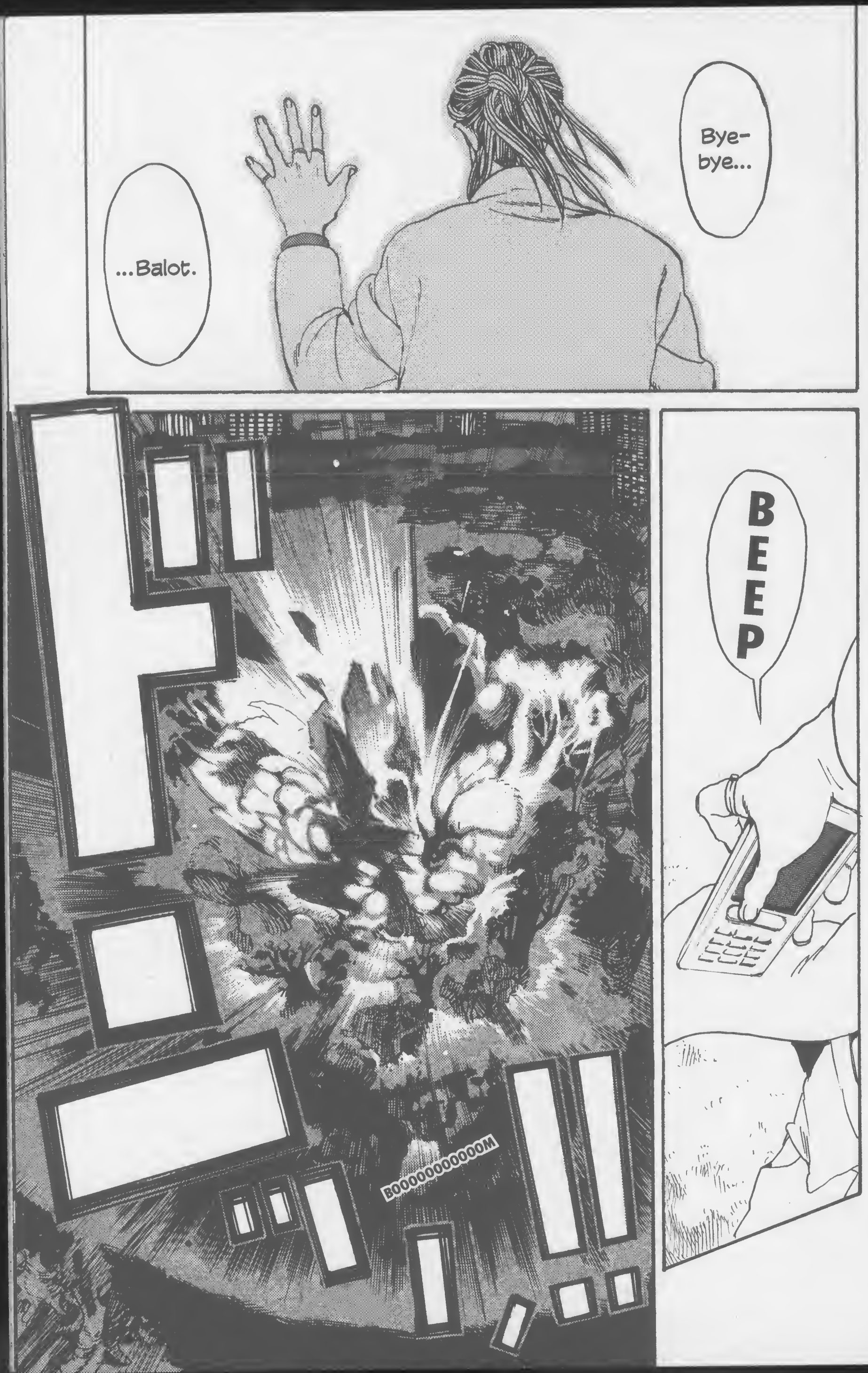

I'm a lucky girl.
Without you, I really would have died.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
Before you, I never rode in such a big car or wore such beautiful clothes.
You've given me every-thing.
It's hard to believe that was really me trembling in the park...
But...
PIIIIIING
You have arrived at your destination.
Shell?
There are tons of girls like me.
Why did you save me?
......

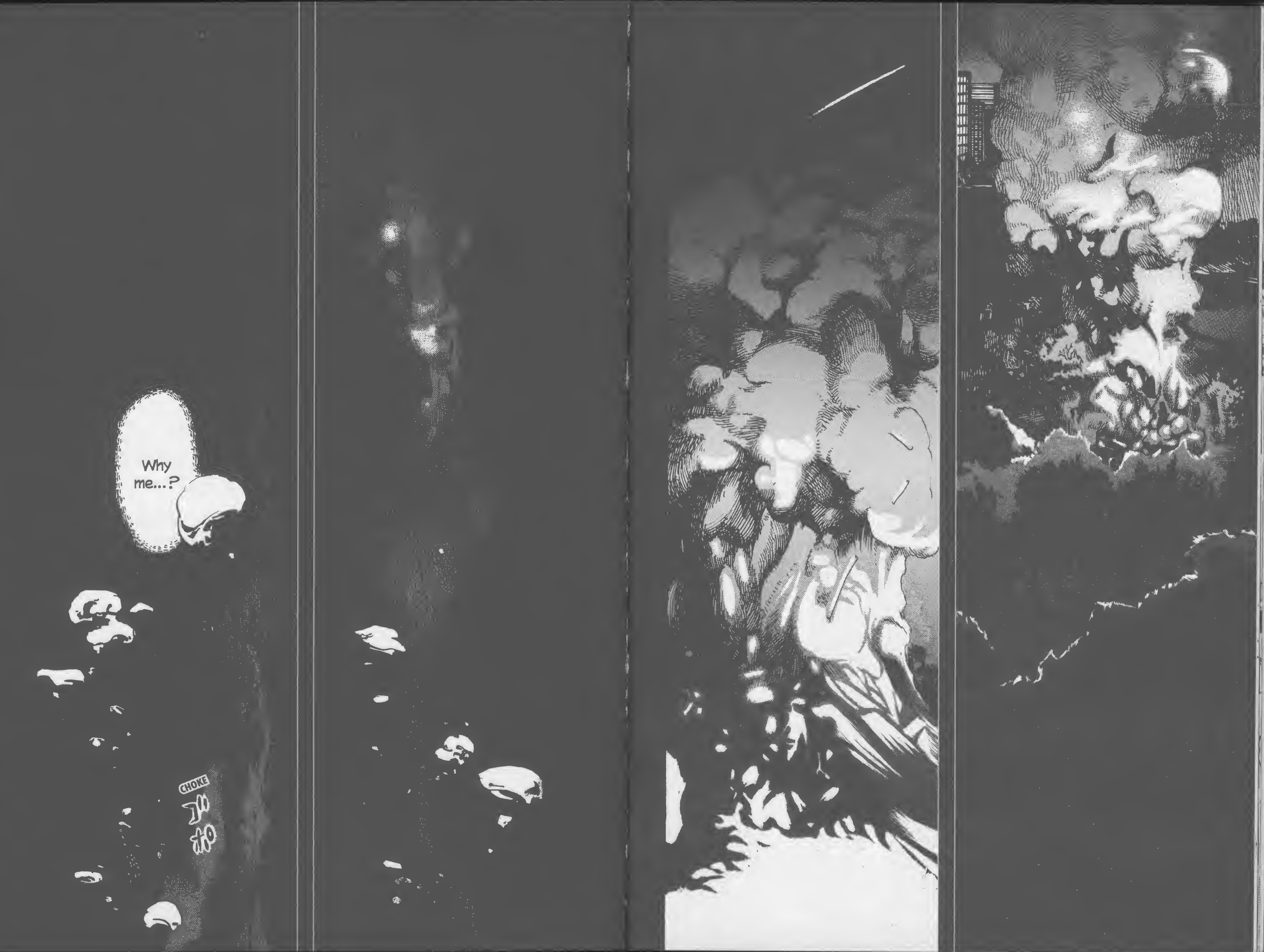

Why me...?
Balot!
You don't need to think about that.
Really.
SQUEEZE

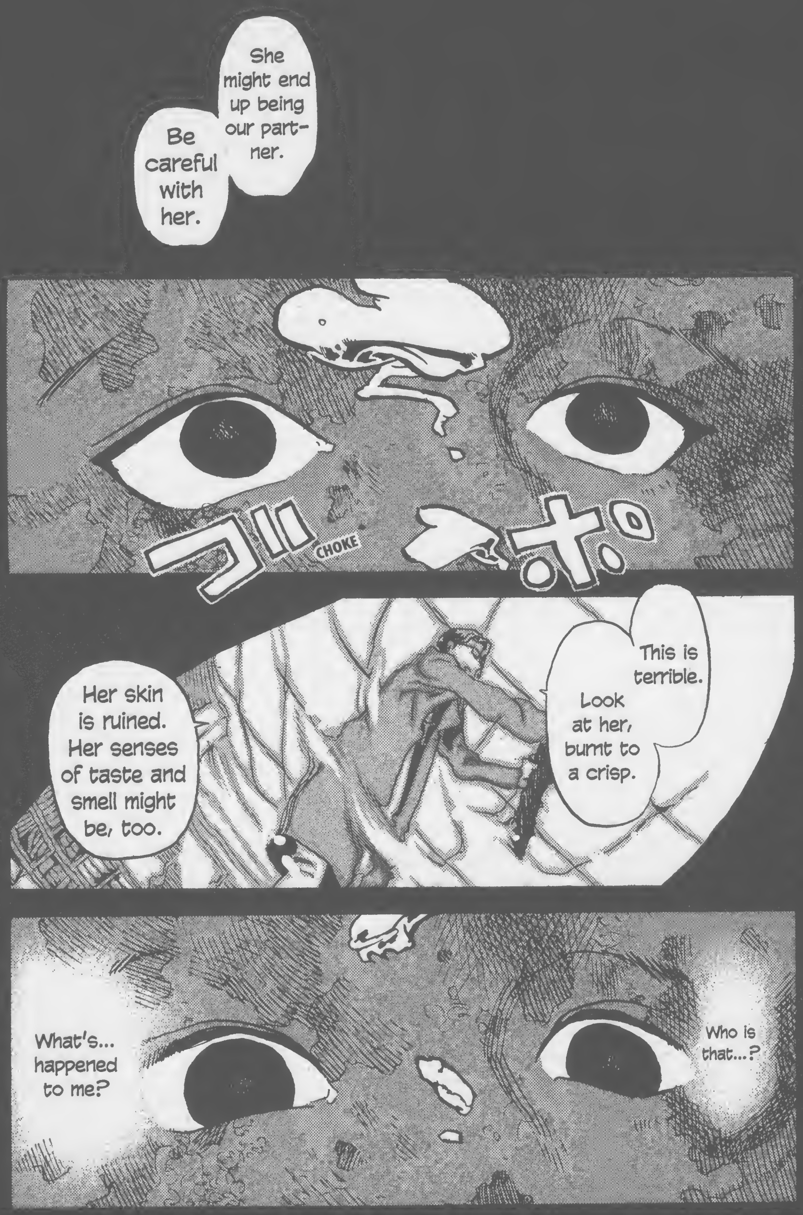

You don't.

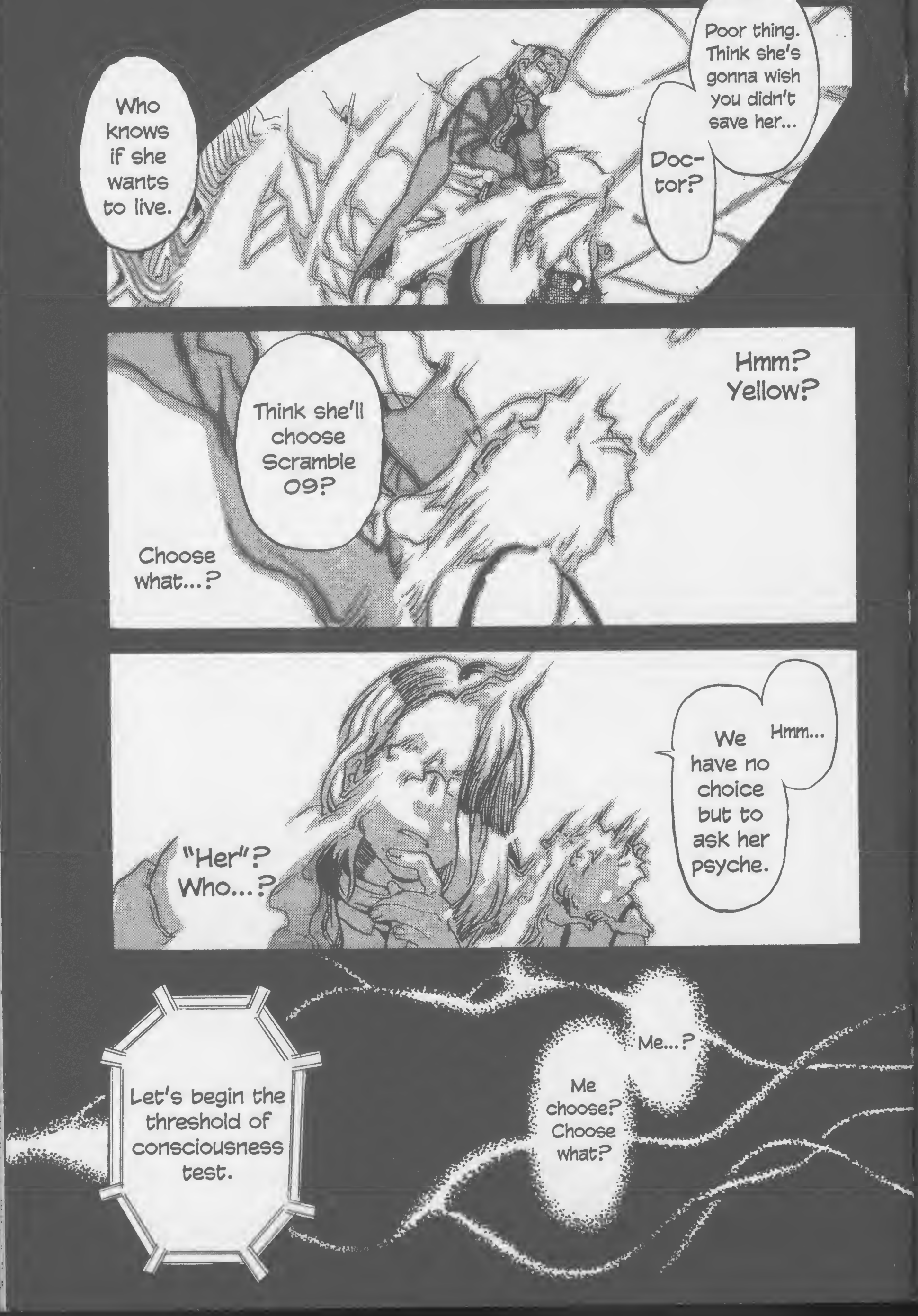

Huh?
Ah!
PFFT
BLRRRSSHH
Guuuggh...
Ughh...
Uck...

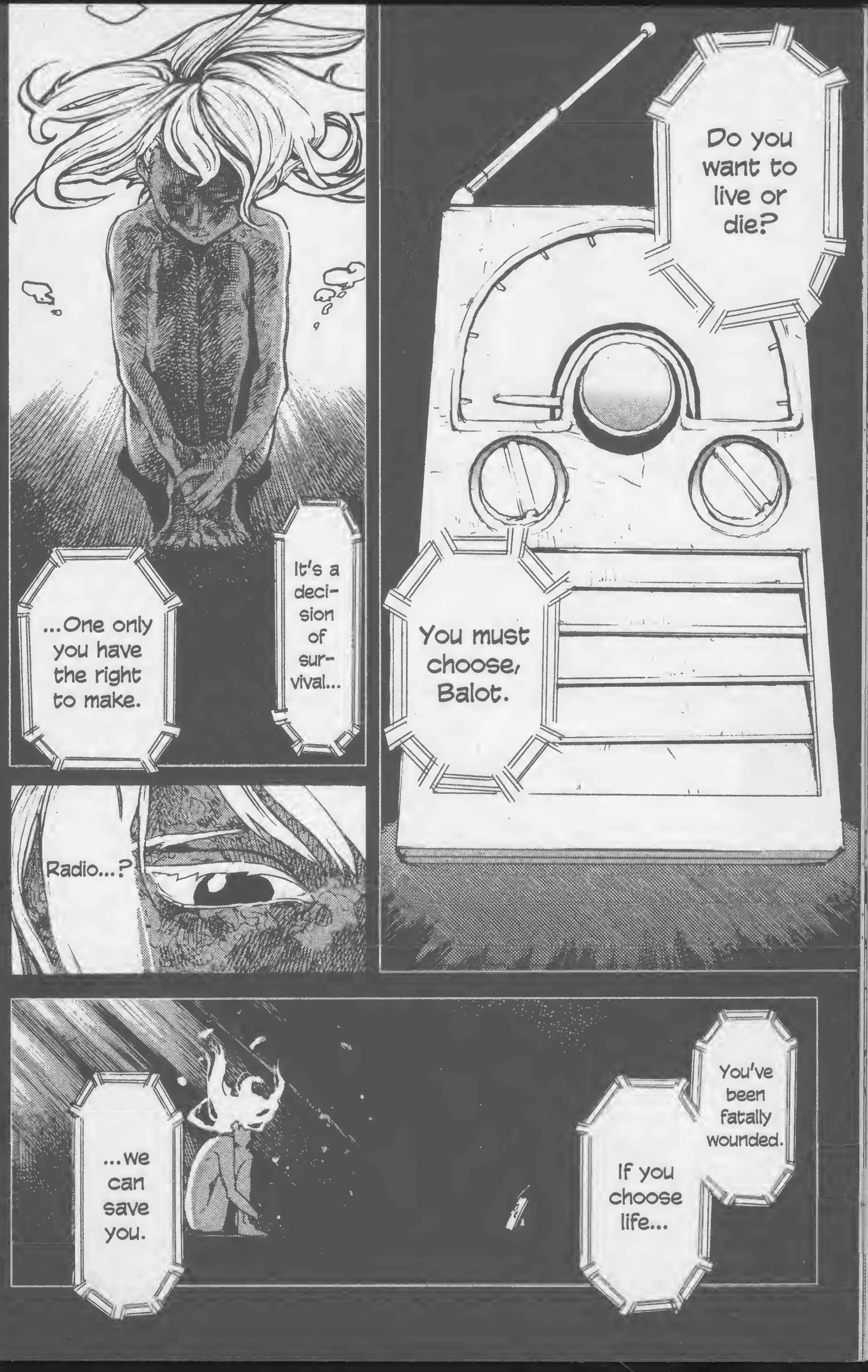

It's me.
It'll all be over soon.
CREAK
I'll leave the rest to you.
THUMP
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH

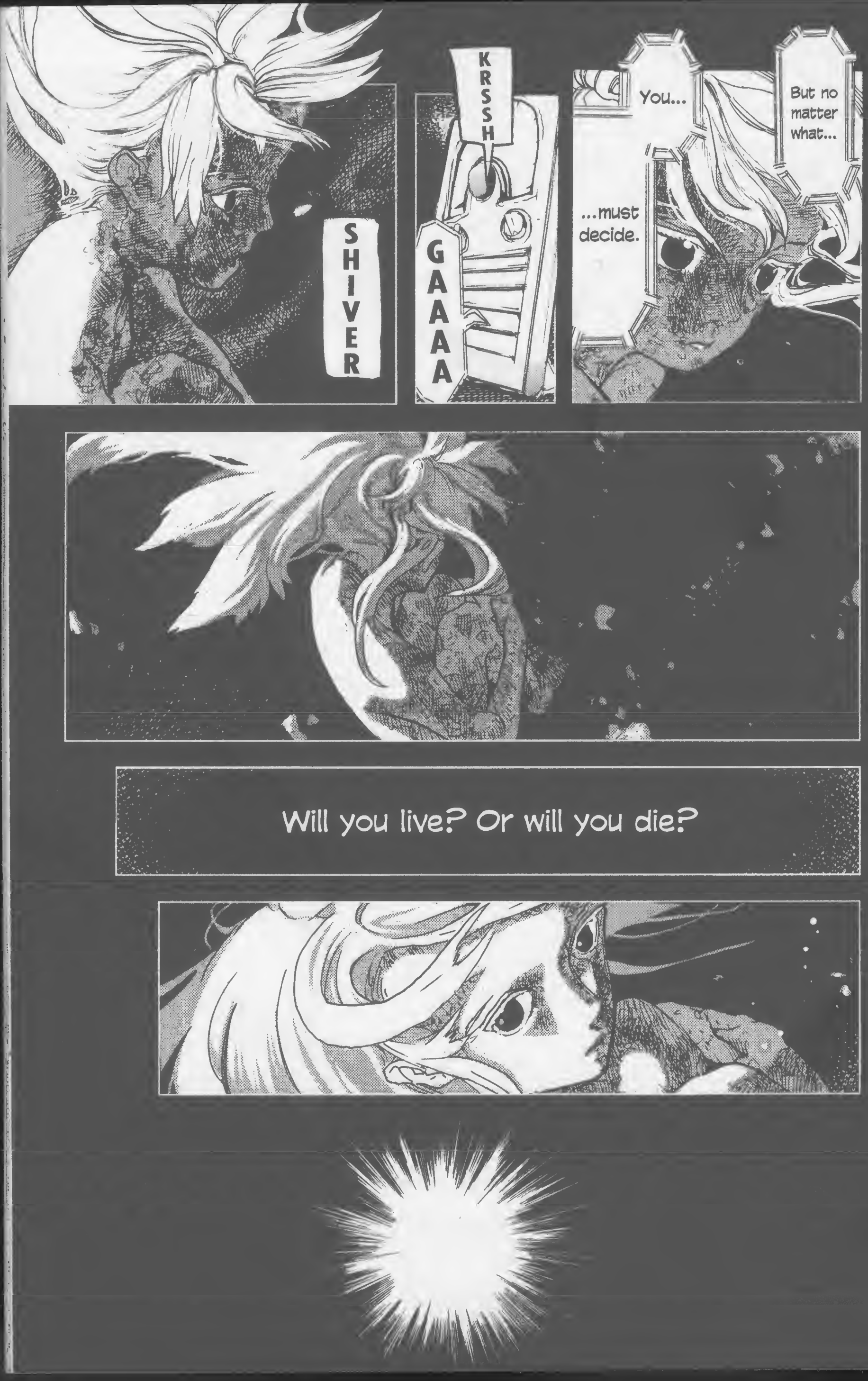

Bye-bye...
...Balot.
BEEP
BOOOOOOOOOOOM

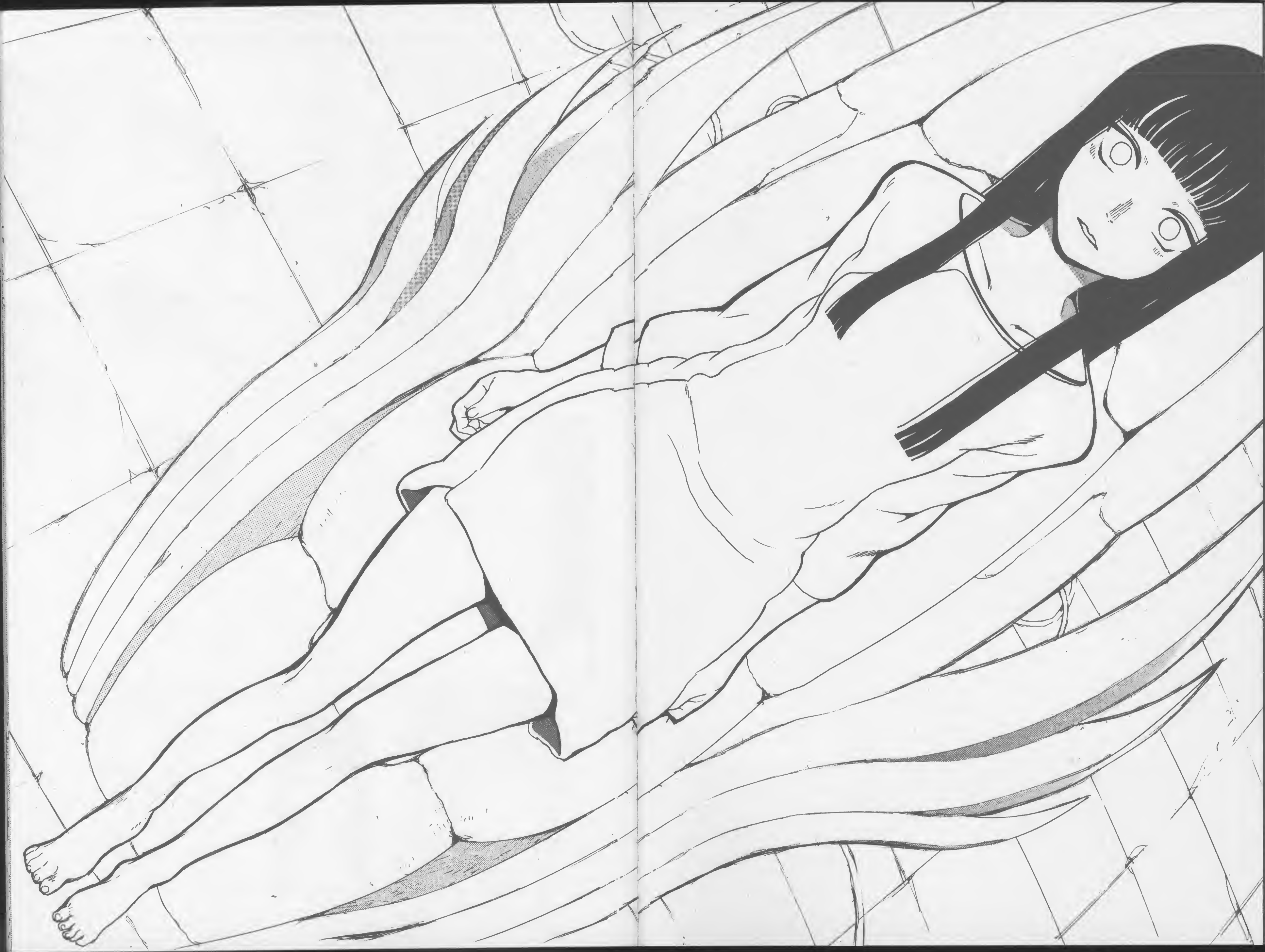

Why me...?
CHOKE
ゴホ

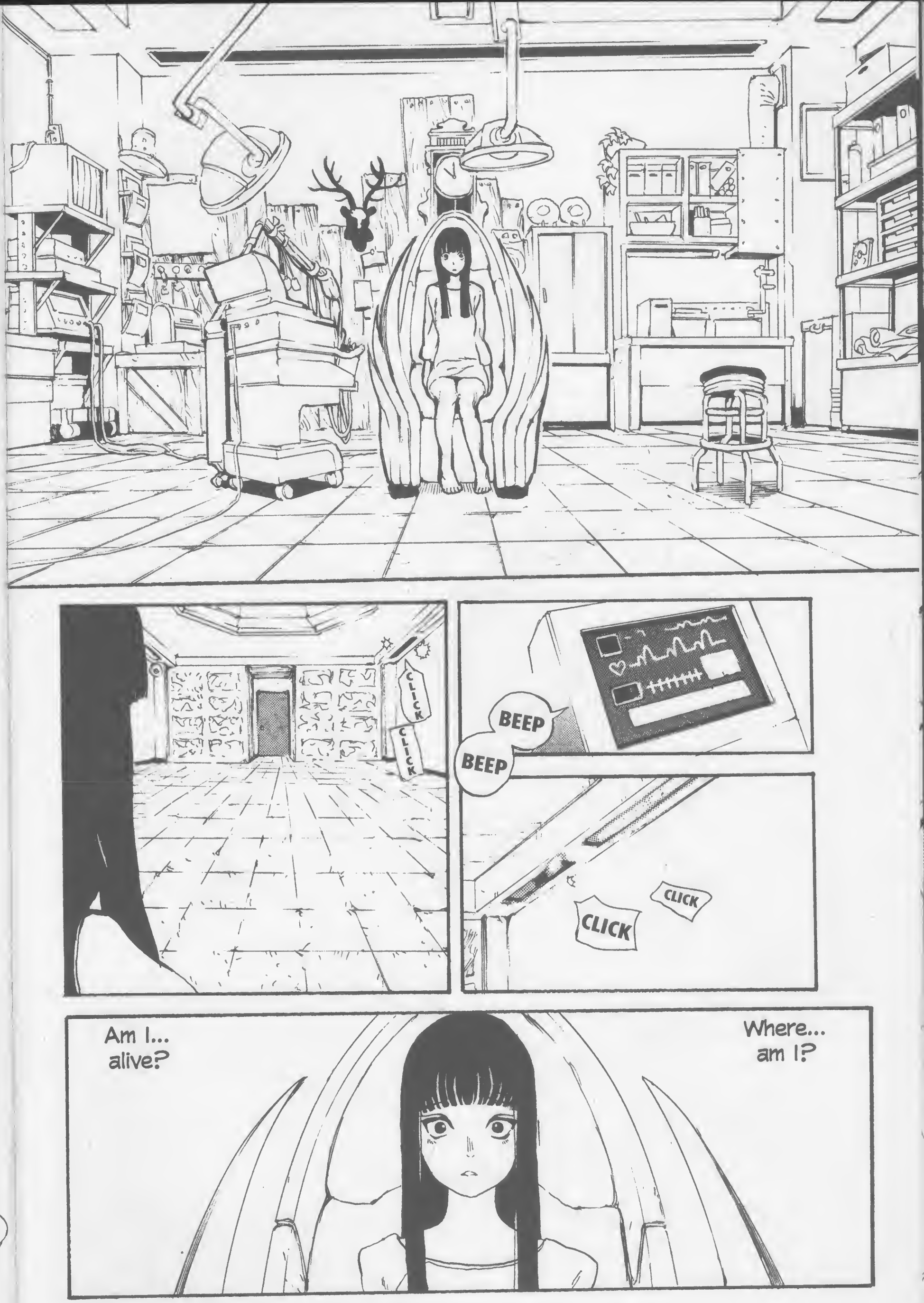

She might end up being our partner.
Be careful with her.
CHOKE
This is terrible.
Look at her, burnt to a crisp.
Her skin is ruined. Her senses of taste and smell might be, too.
Who is that...?
What's... happened to me?

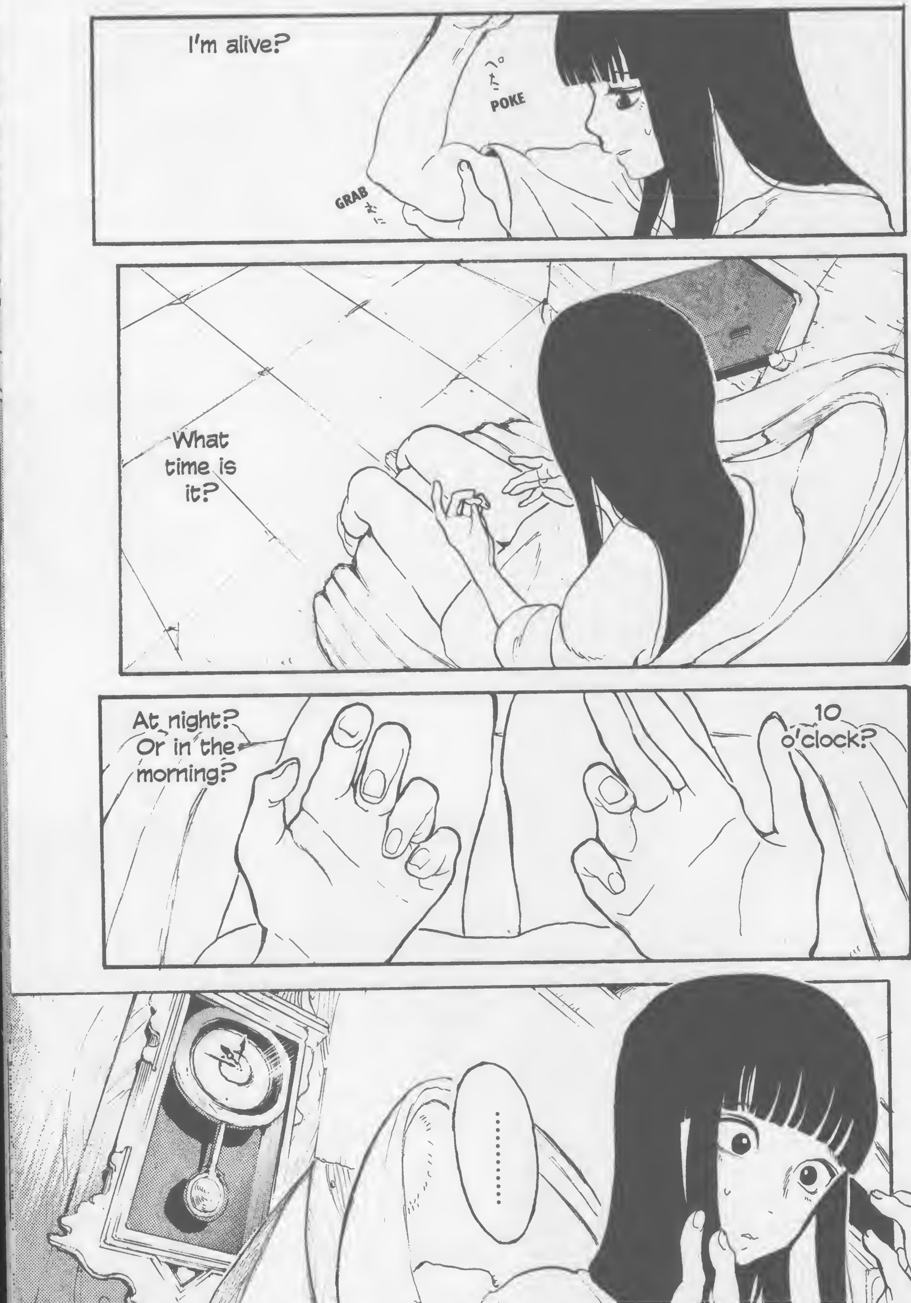

Poor thing. Think she's gonna wish you didn't save her...
Doctor?
Who knows if she wants to live.
Hmm? Yellow?
Think she'll choose Scramble 09?
Choose what...?
Hmm...
We have no choice but to ask her psyche.
"Her"? Who...?
Me...?
Me choose? Choose what?
Let's begin the threshold of consciousness test.

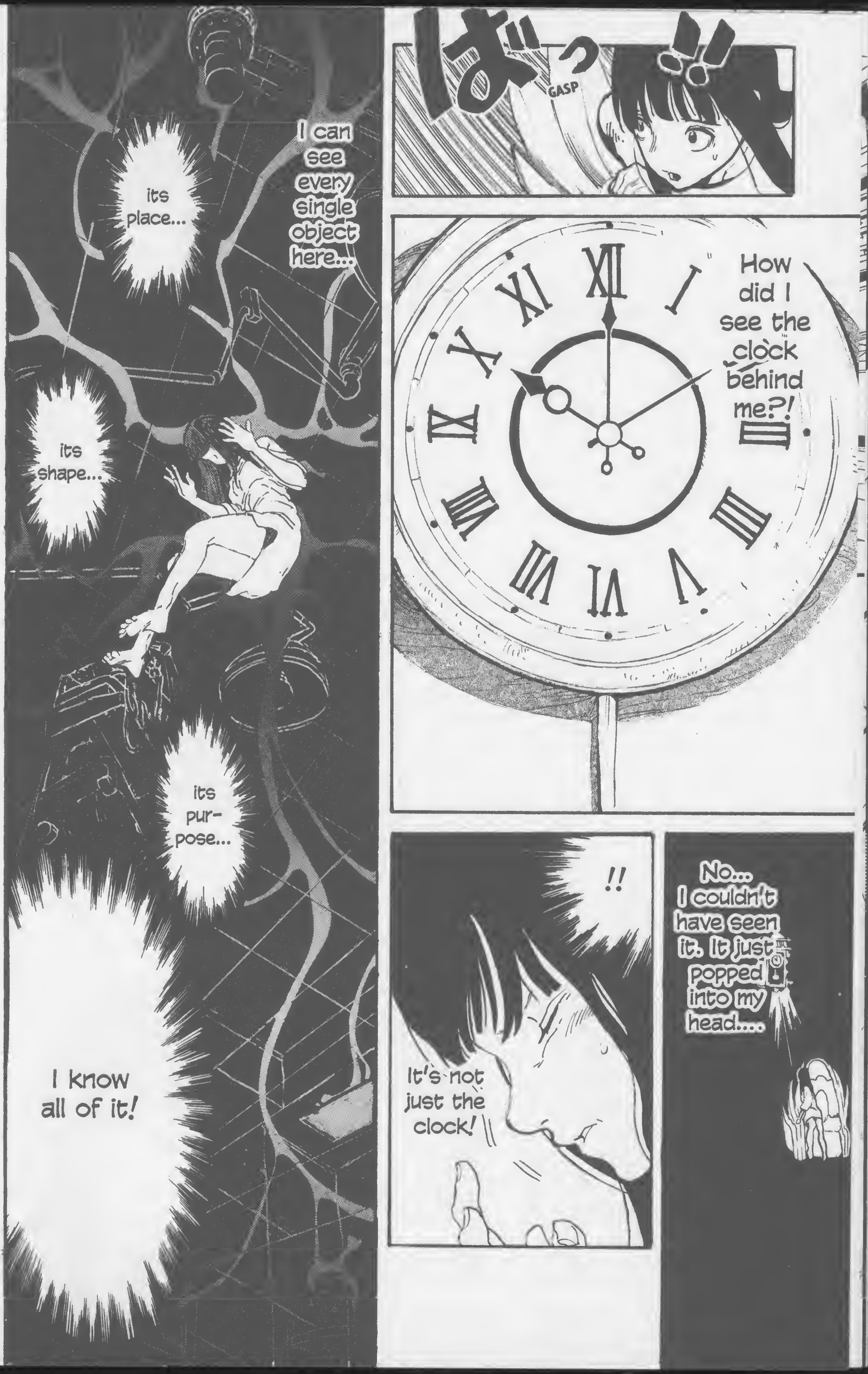

Do you want to live or die?
You must choose, Balot.
It's a decision of survival...
...One only you have the right to make.
Radio...?
You've been fatally wounded.
If you choose life...
...we can save you.

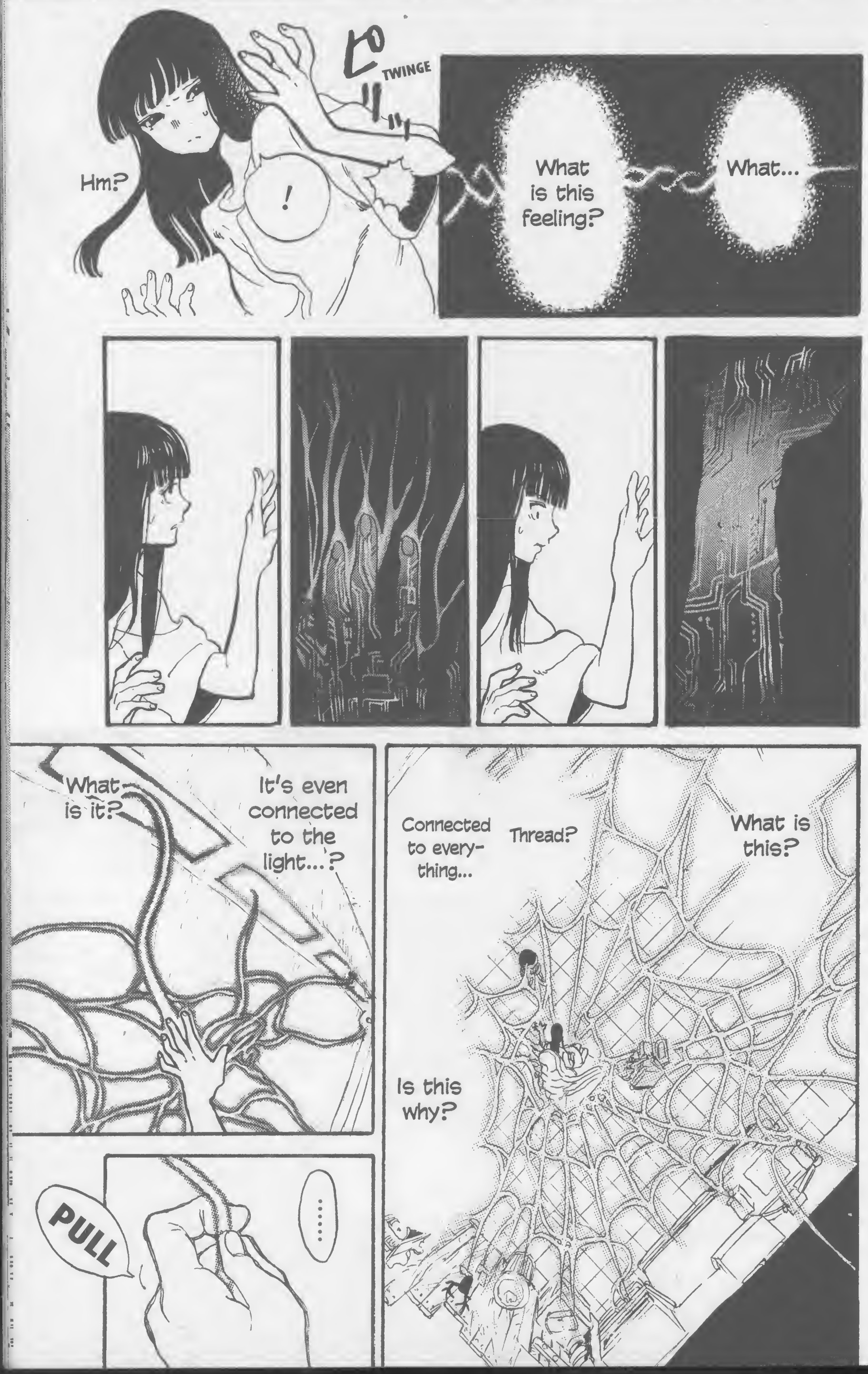

But no matter what...
You...
...must decide.
KRSSH
GAAAA
SHIVER
Will you live? Or will you die?

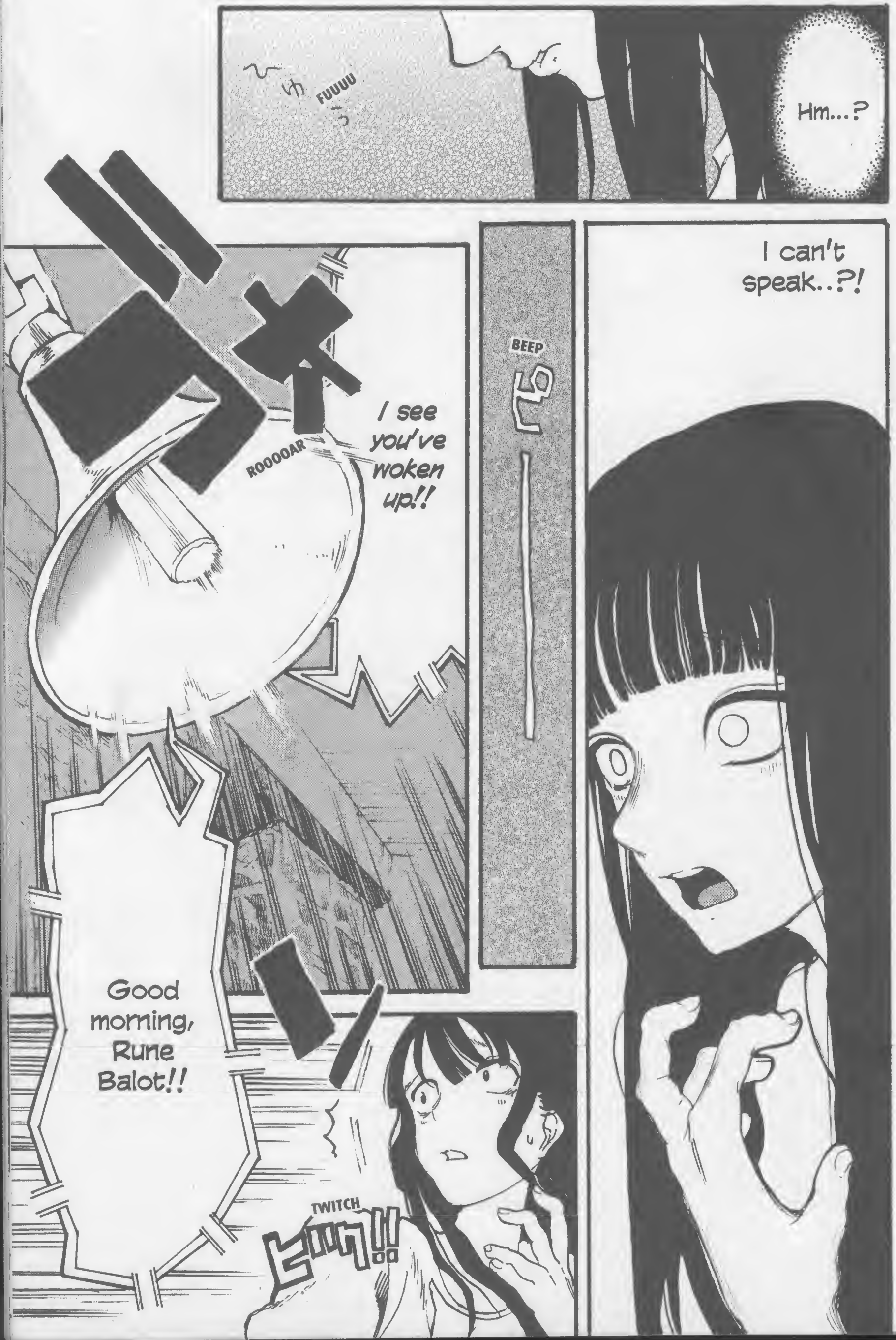


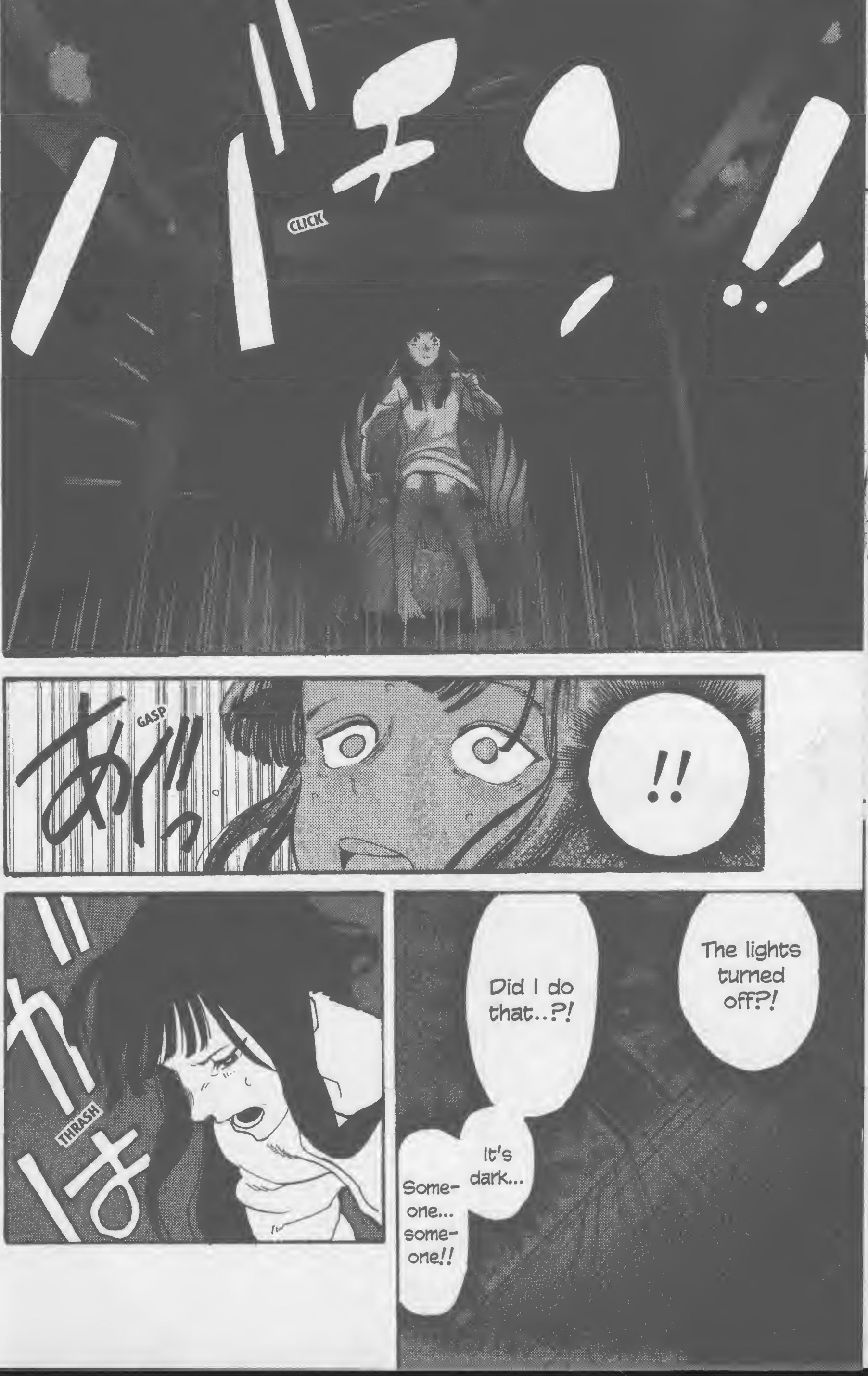

BEEP
BEEP
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
Where... am I?
Am I... alive?

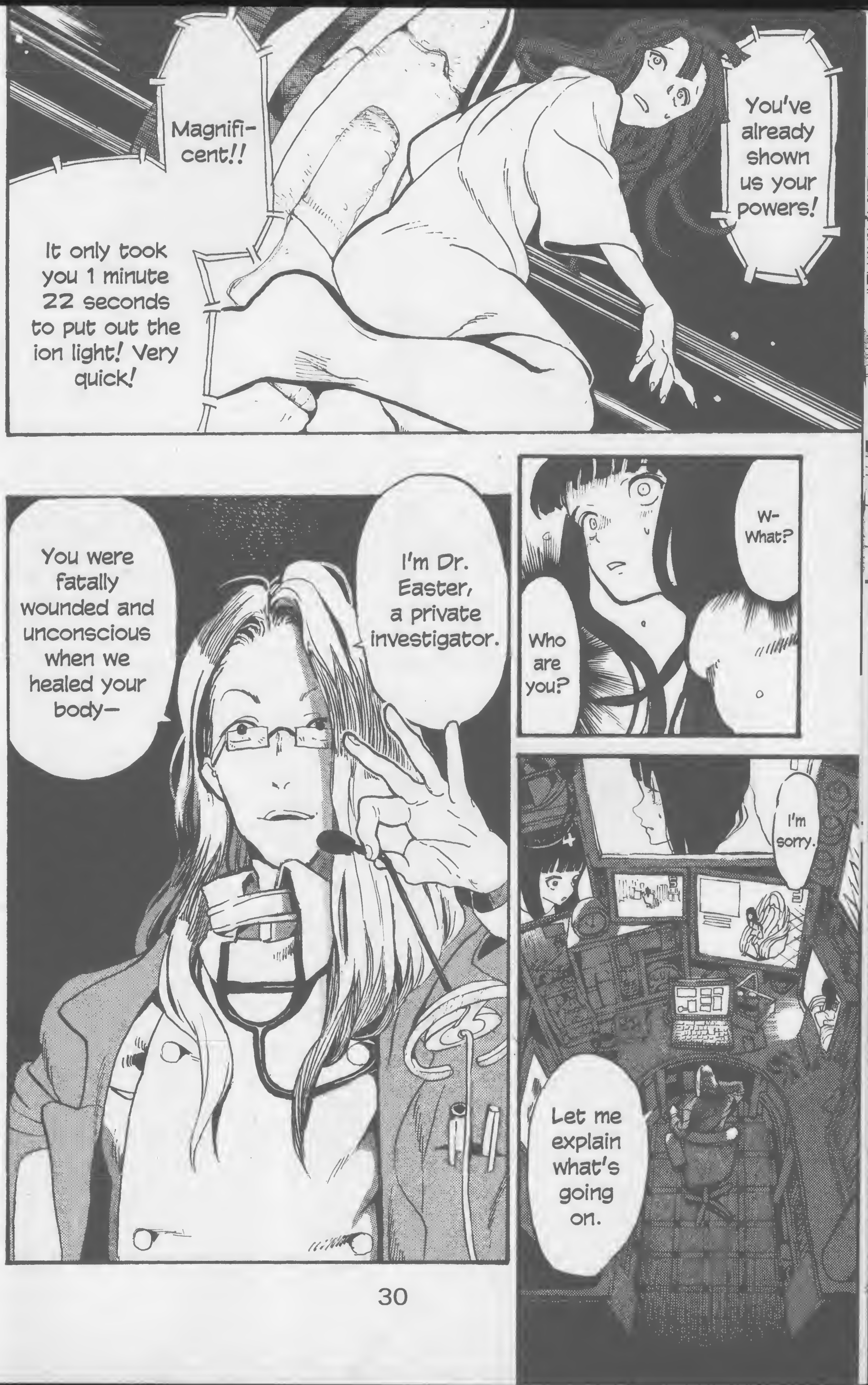

I'm alive?
ぺた POKE
GRAB むに
What time is it?
10 o'clock?
At night? Or in the morning?
……

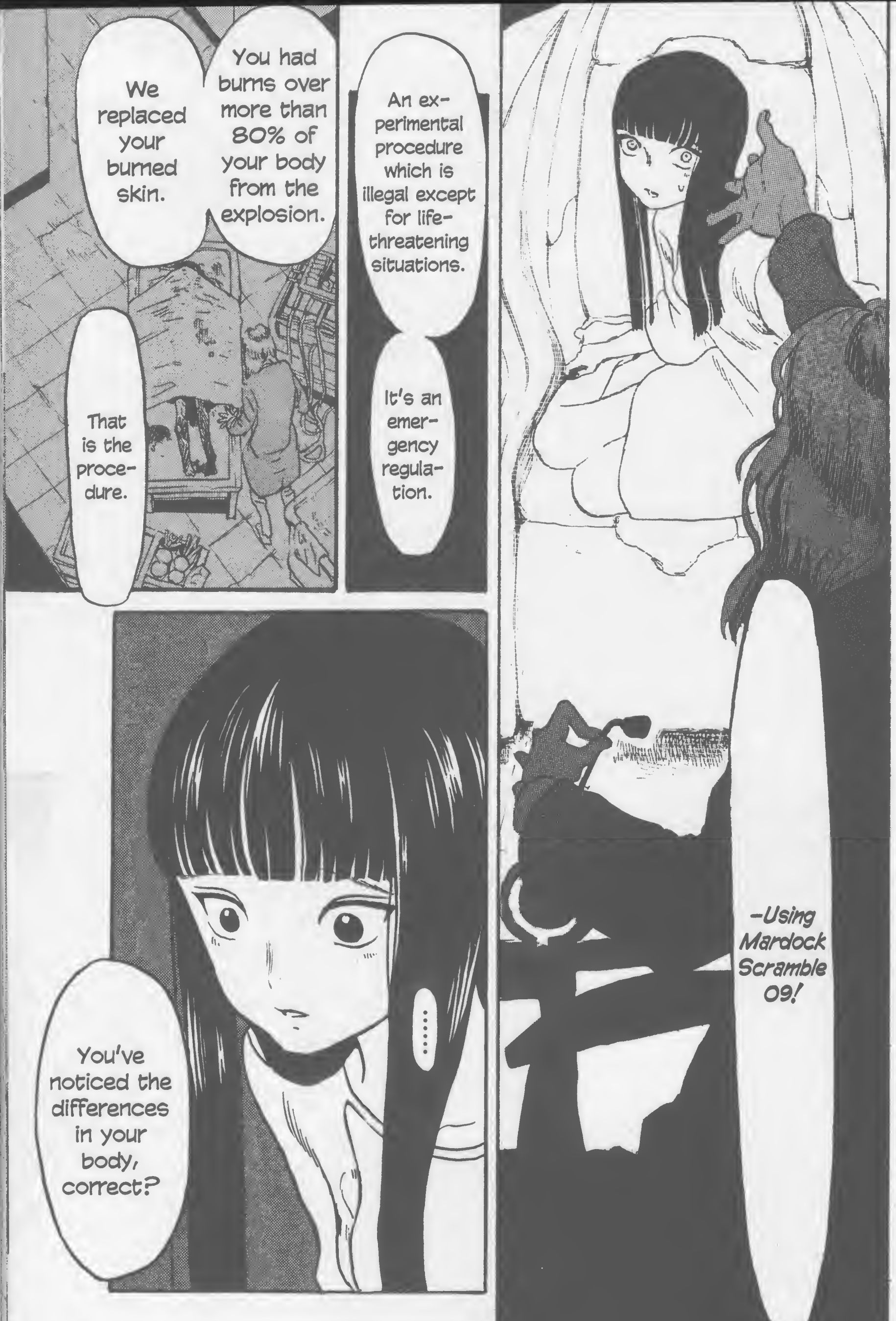

ばっ
GASP
!!
How did I see the clock behind me?!
No... I couldn't have seen it. It just popped into my head....
!!
It's not just the clock!
I can see every single object here...
its place...
its shape...
its purpose...
I know all of it!

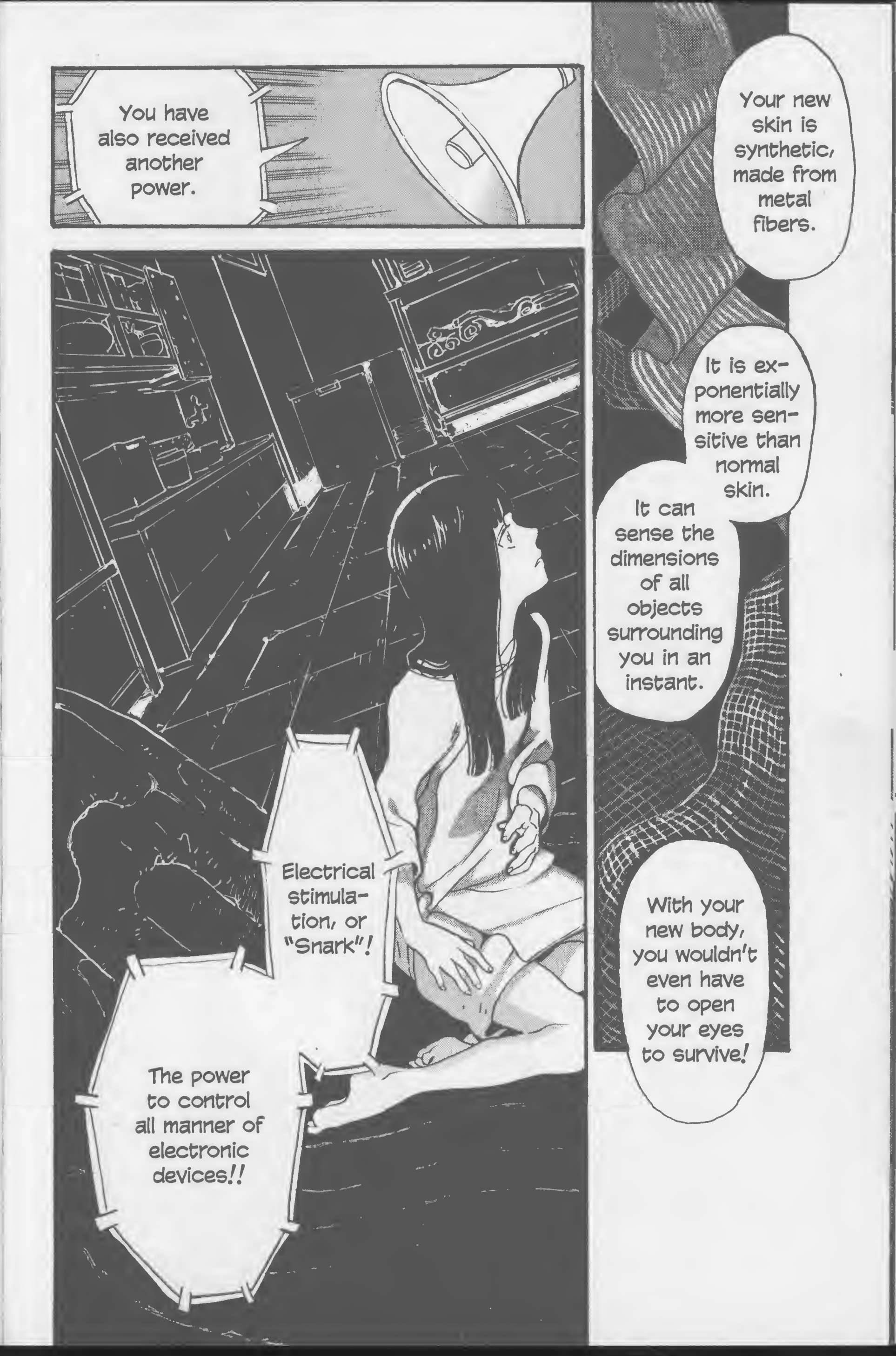

What...
What is this feeling?
ピ
TWINGE
Hm?
!
What is this?
Thread?
Connected to everything...
Is this why?
It's even connected to the light...?
What is it?
......
PULL

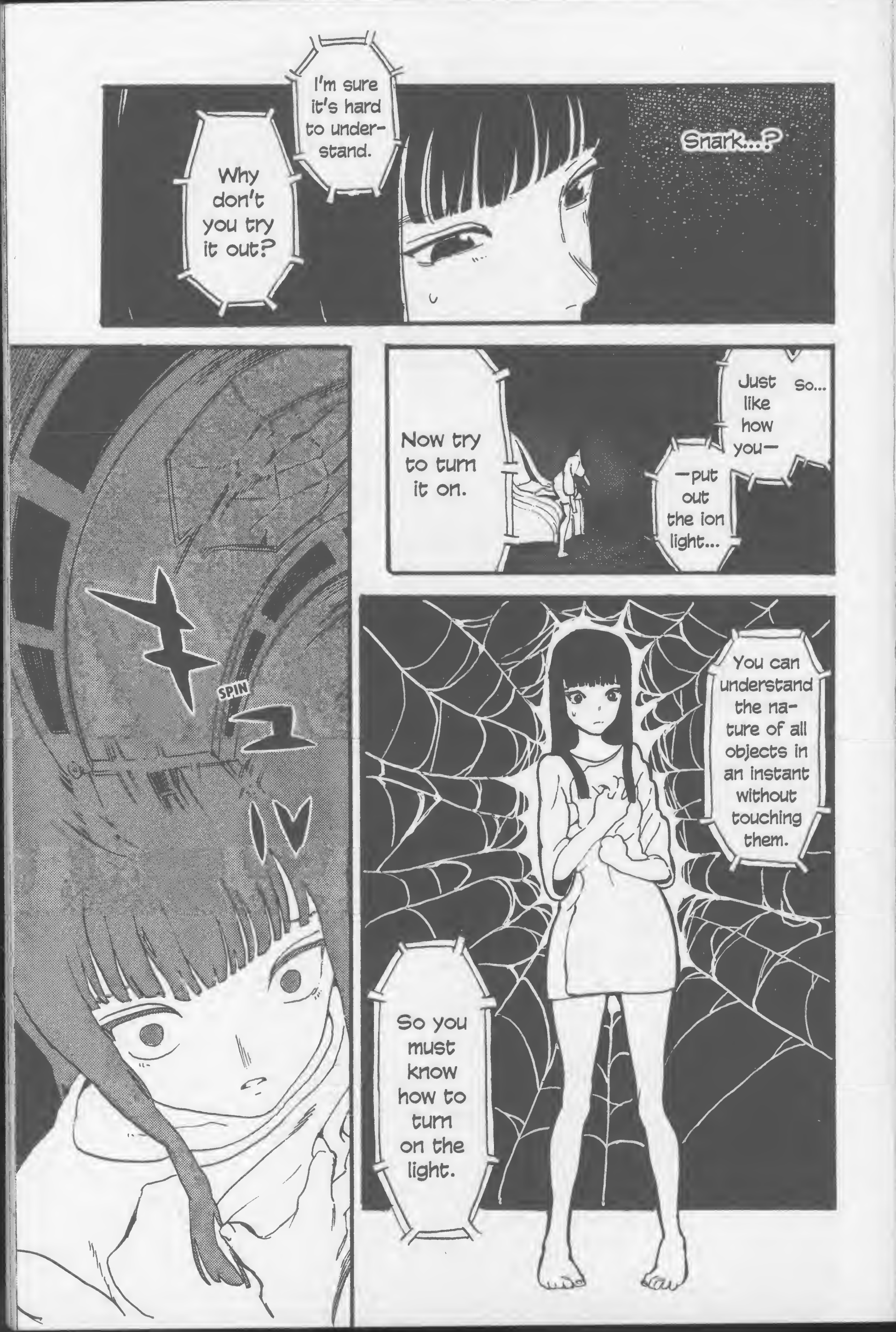

FUUUU
Hm...?
BEEP
I can't speak..?!
ROOOOAR
I see you've woken up!!
Good morning, Rune Balot!!
TWITCH

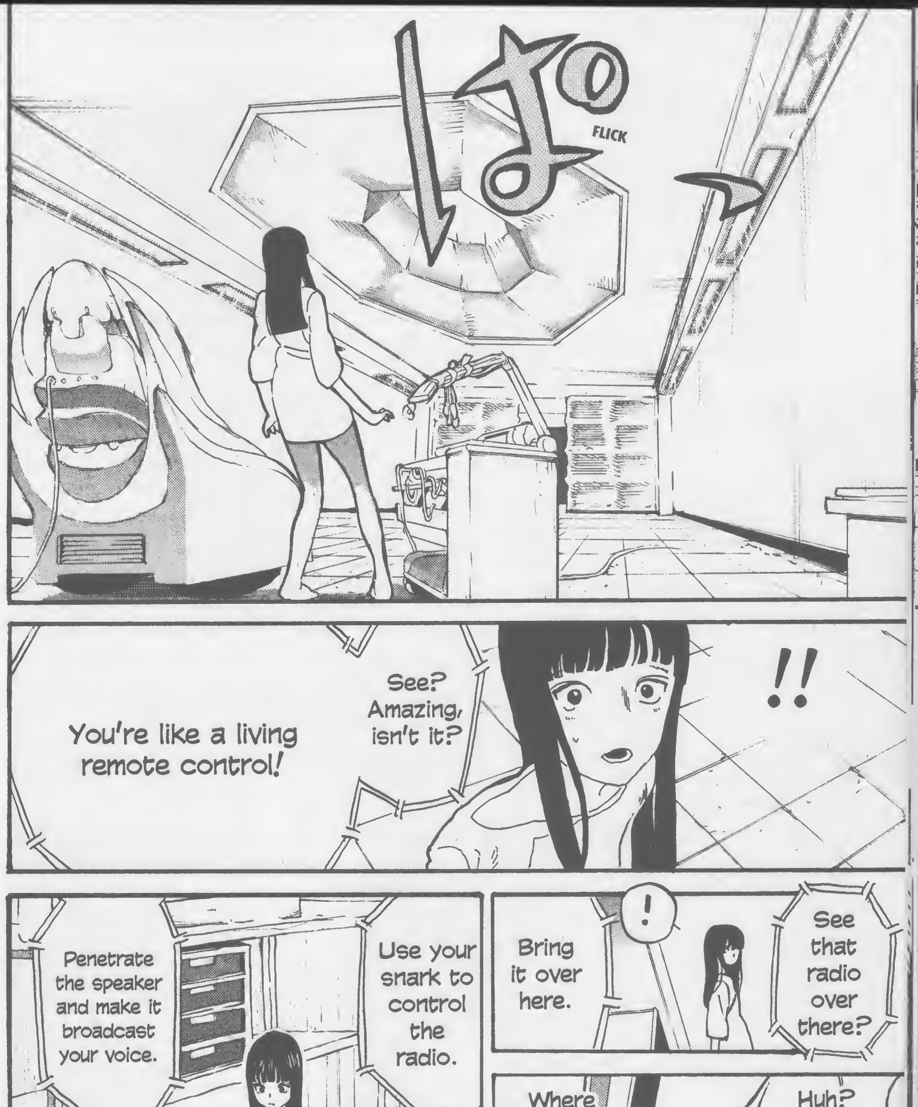

CLICK
!!
GASP
!!
THRASH
The lights turned off?!
Did I do that..?!
It's dark...
Someone... someone!!

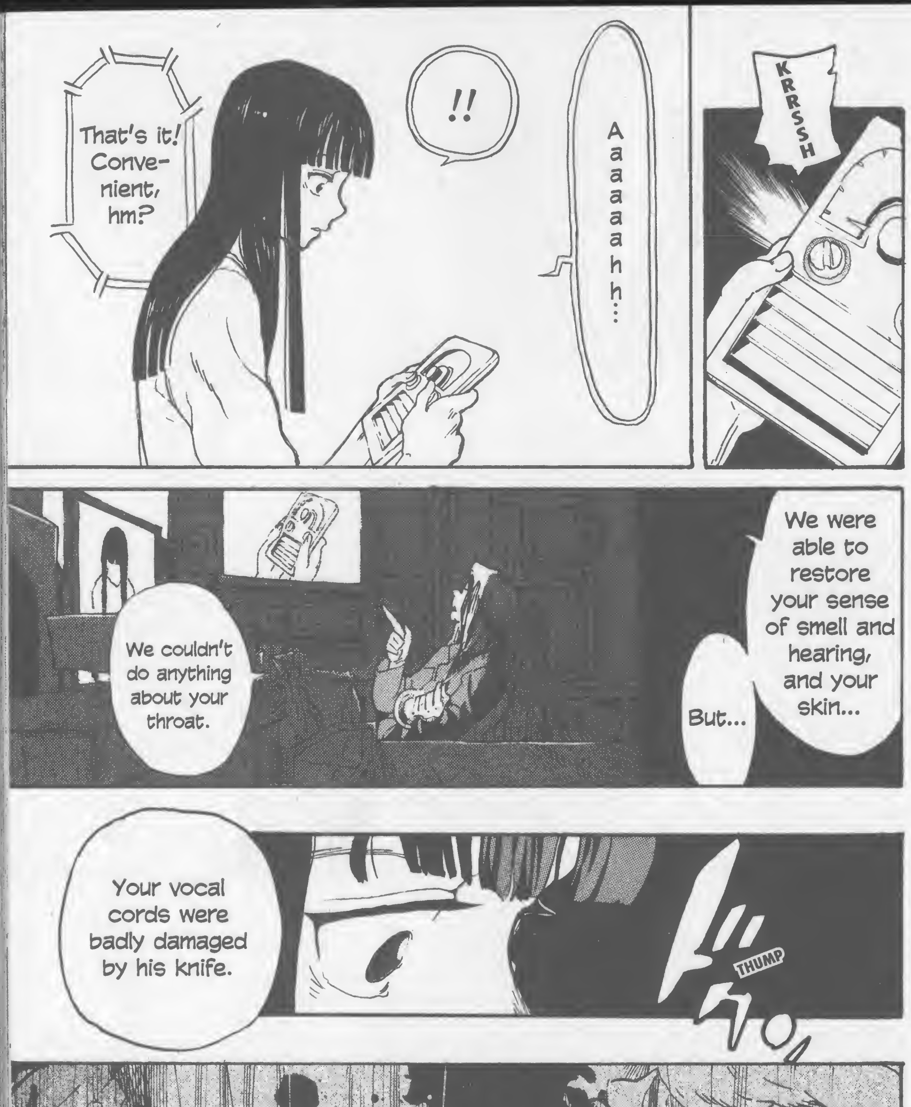

You've already shown us your powers!
Magnificent!!
It only took you 1 minute 22 seconds to put out the ion light! Very quick!
W- What?
Who are you?
I'm sorry.
Let me explain what's going on.
I'm Dr. Easter, a private investigator.
You were fatally wounded and unconscious when we healed your body—

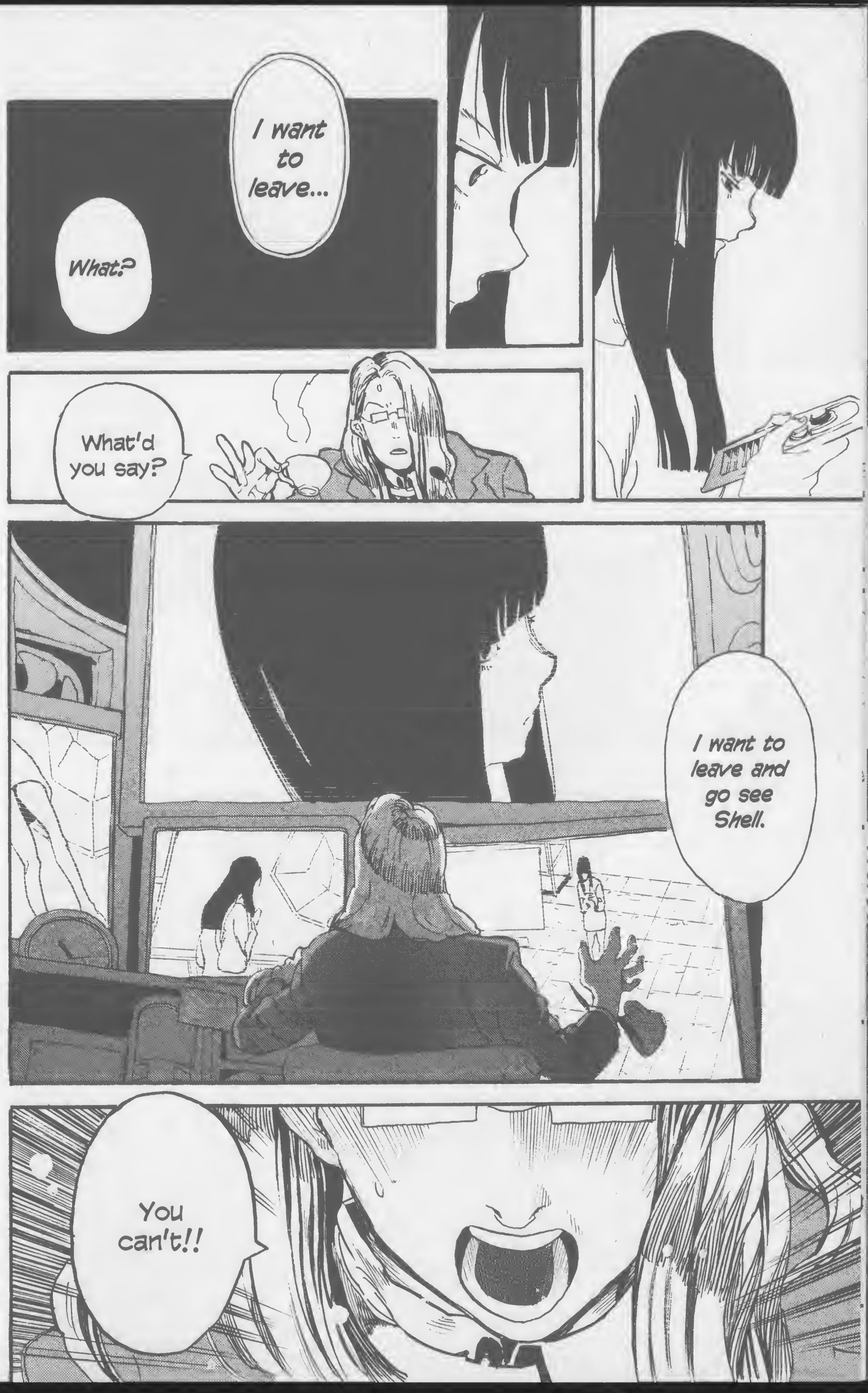

—Using Mardock Scramble 09!
An experimental procedure which is illegal except for life-threatening situations.
It's an emergency regulation.
You had burns over more than 80% of your body from the explosion.
We replaced your burned skin.
That is the procedure.
……
You've noticed the differences in your body, correct?

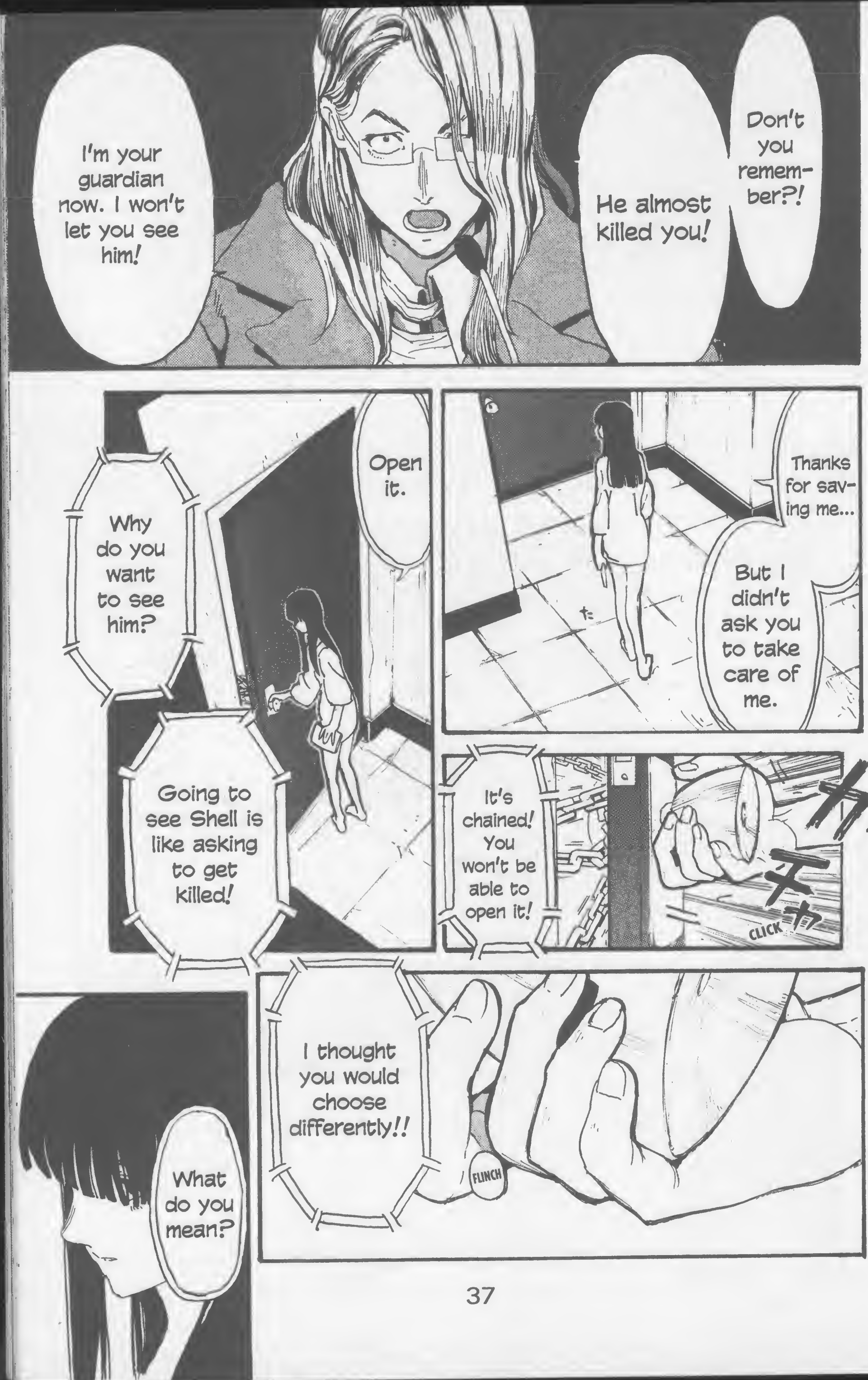

Your new skin is synthetic, made from metal fibers.
It is exponentially more sensitive than normal skin.
It can sense the dimensions of all objects surrounding you in an instant.
With your new body, you wouldn't even have to open your eyes to survive!
You have also received another power.
Electrical stimulation, or "Snark"!
The power to control all manner of electronic devices!!

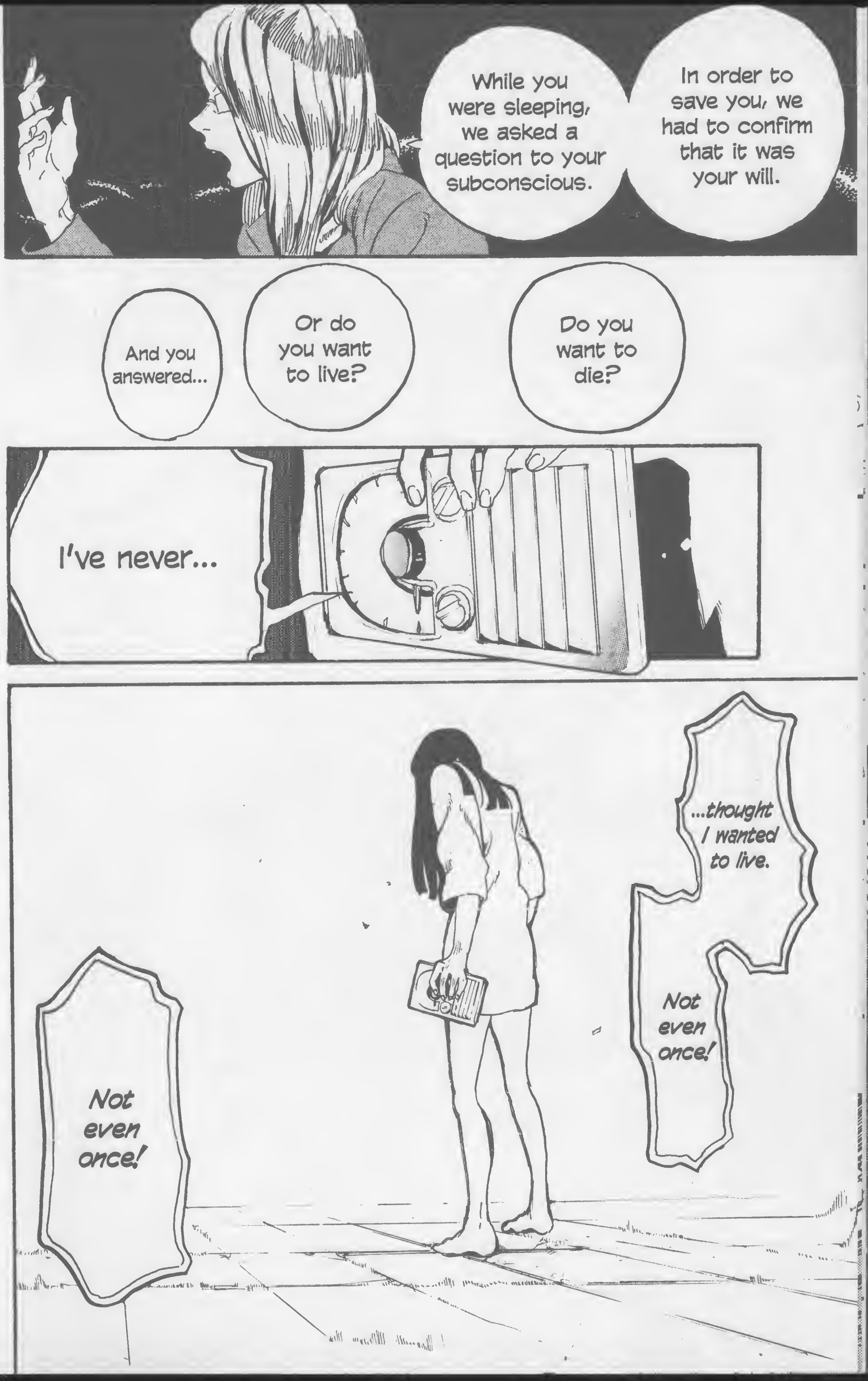

Snark...?
I'm sure it's hard to understand.
Why don't you try it out?
So...
Just like how you—
—put out the ion light...
Now try to turn it on.
You can understand the nature of all objects in an instant without touching them.
So you must know how to turn on the light.
SPIN

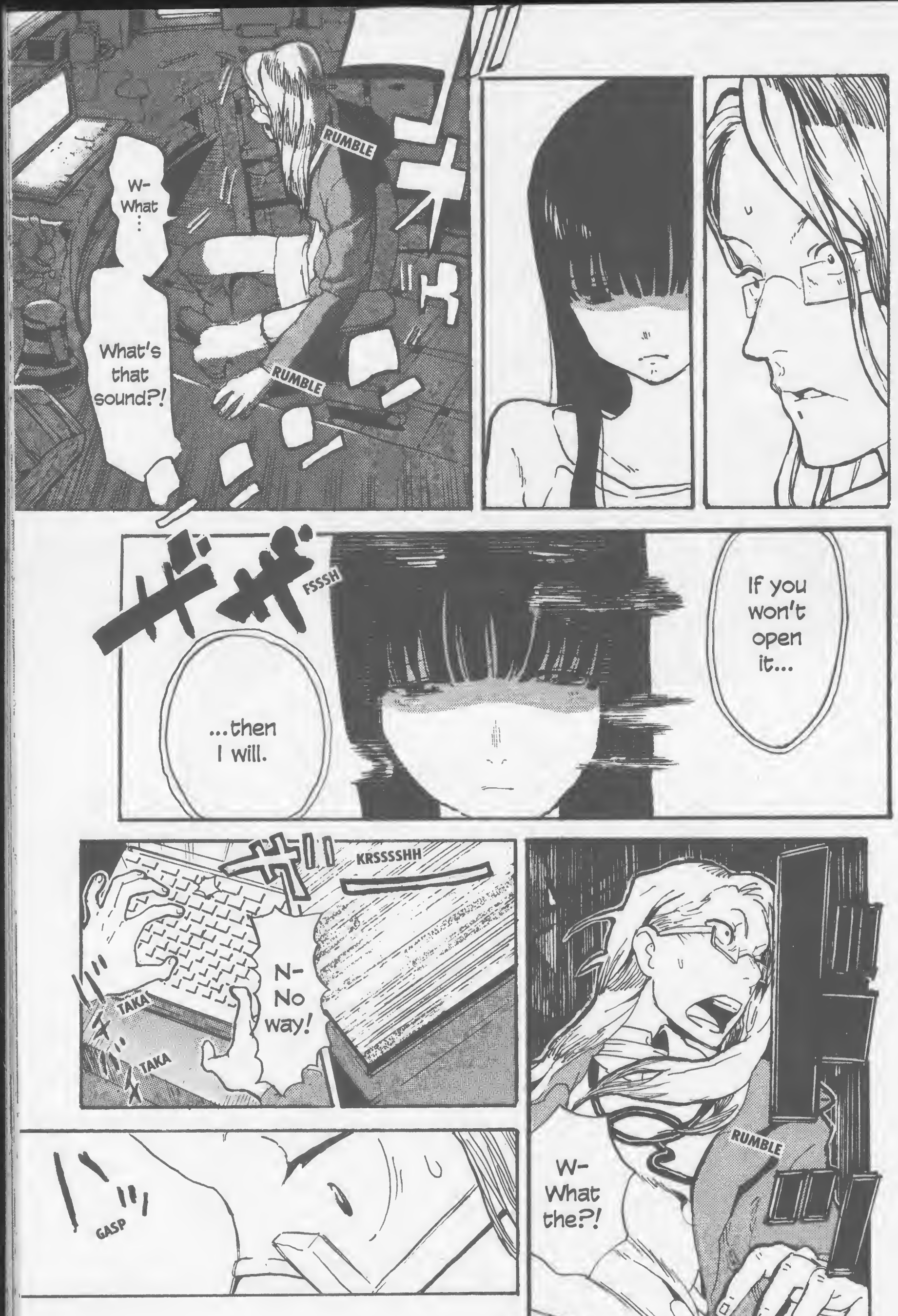

ぱ
FLICK
!!
See? Amazing, isn't it?
You're like a living remote control!
See that radio over there?
!
Bring it over here.
Huh?
Where have I seen this before?
Use your snark to control the radio.
Penetrate the speaker and make it broadcast your voice.
Try it!

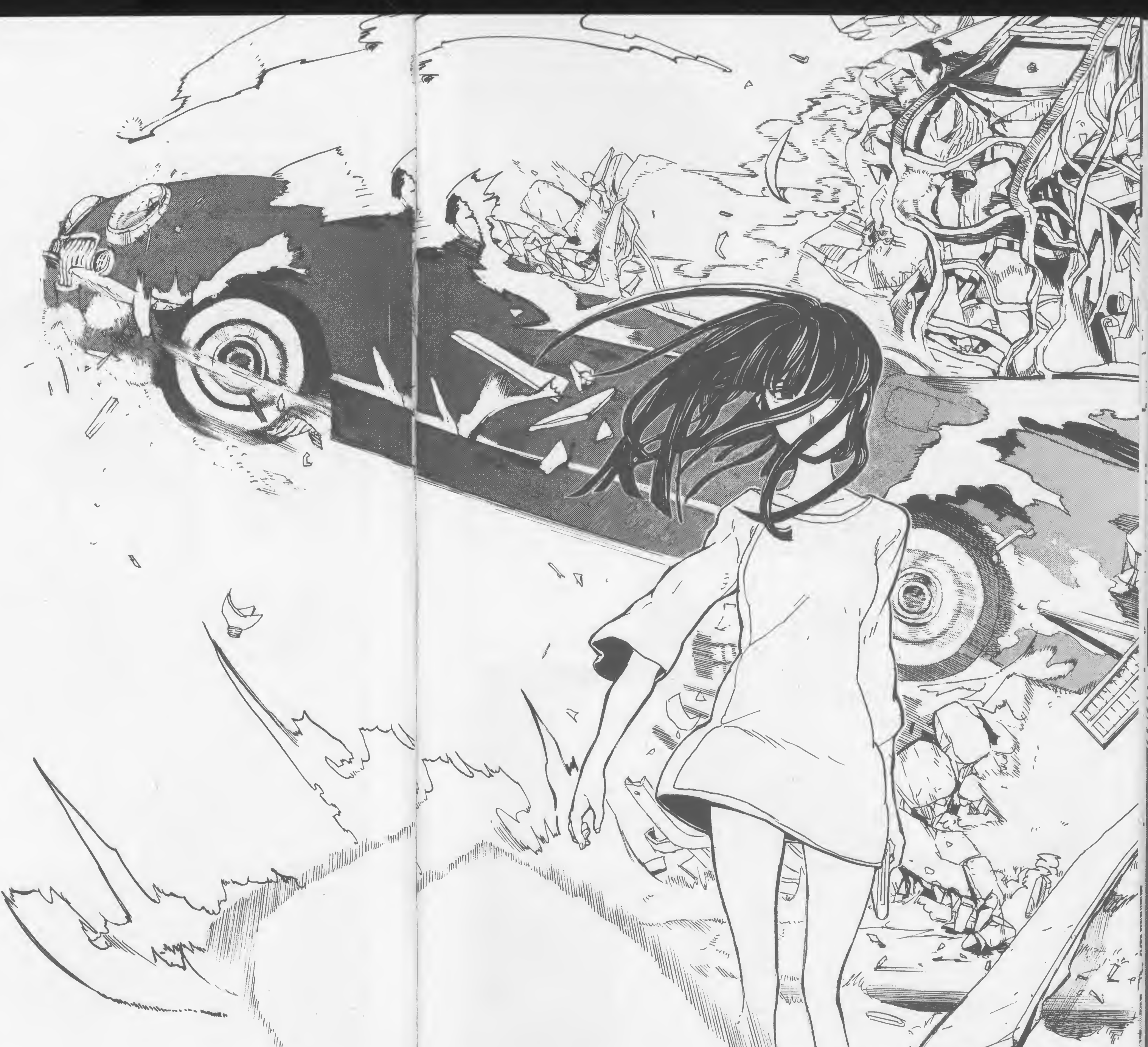

KRRSSH
Aaaaaaah...
!!
That's it! Convenient, hm?
We were able to restore your sense of smell and hearing, and your skin...
But...
We couldn't do anything about your throat.
THUMP
Your vocal cords were badly damaged by his knife.

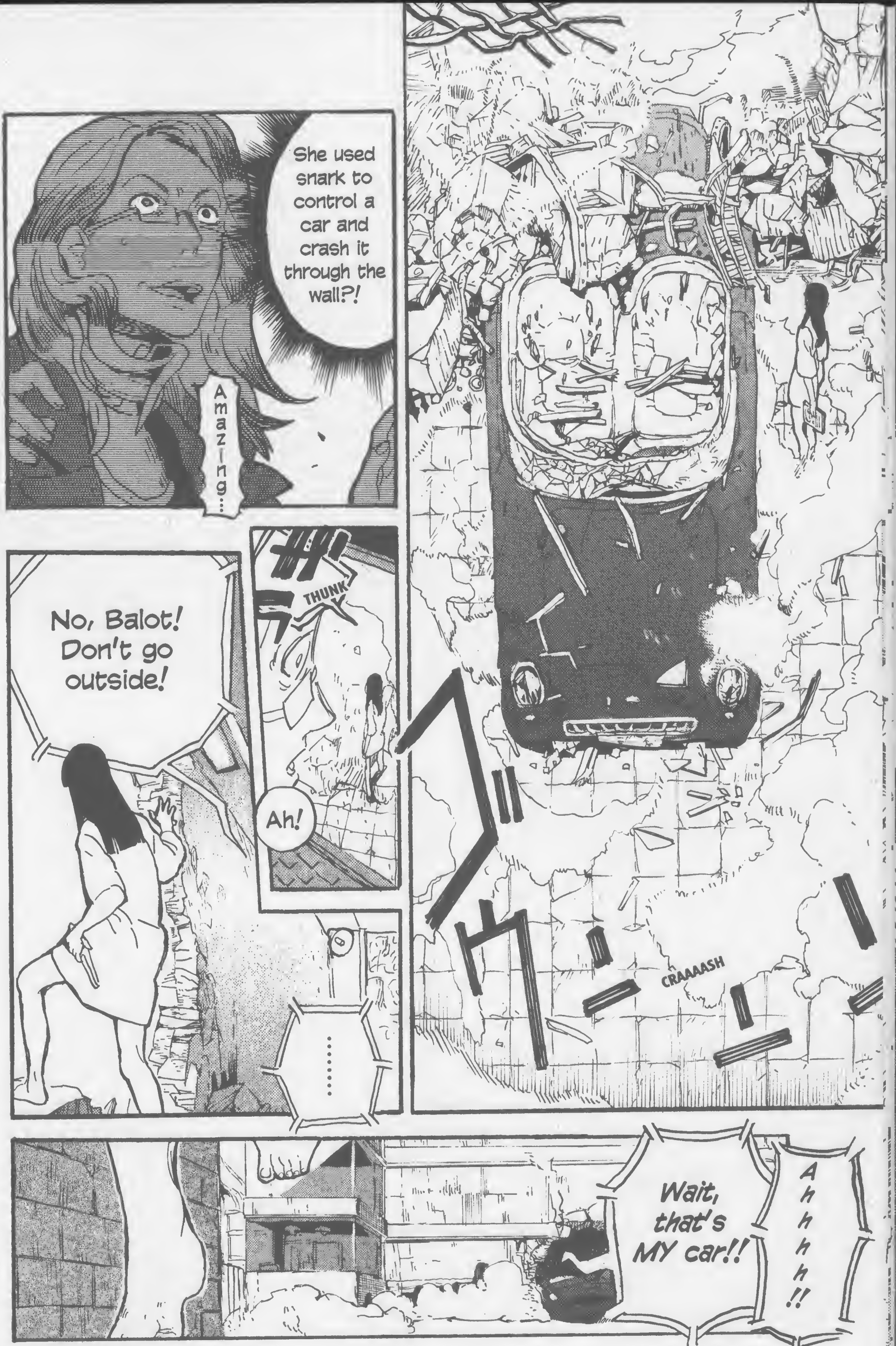

I want to leave...
What?
What'd you say?
I want to leave and go see Shell.
You can't!!

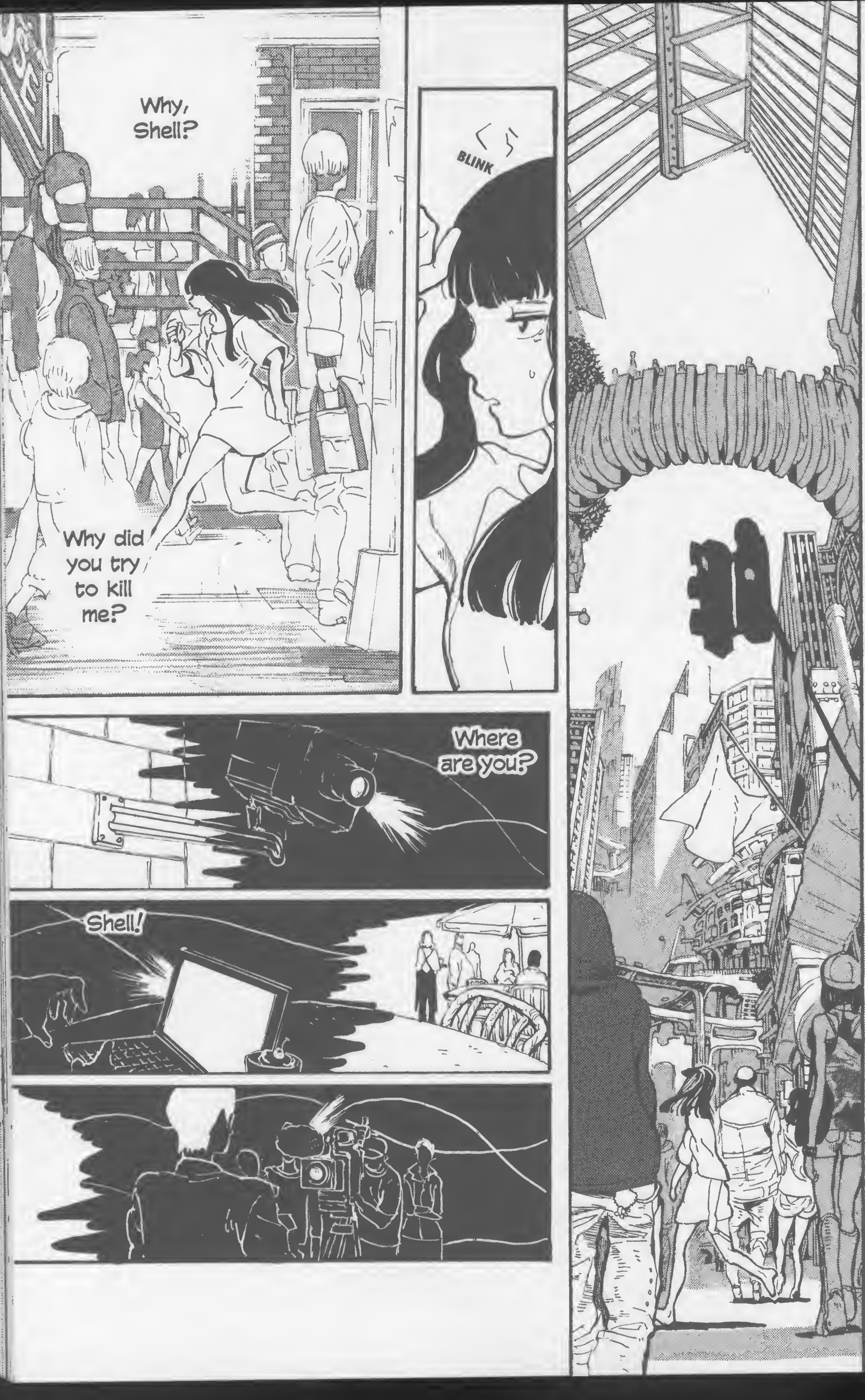

Don't you remember?!
He almost killed you!
I'm your guardian now. I won't let you see him!
Thanks for saving me...
But I didn't ask you to take care of me.
Open it.
Why do you want to see him?
It's chained! You won't be able to open it!
CLICK
Going to see Shell is like asking to get killed!
I thought you would choose differently!!
FLINCH
What do you mean?

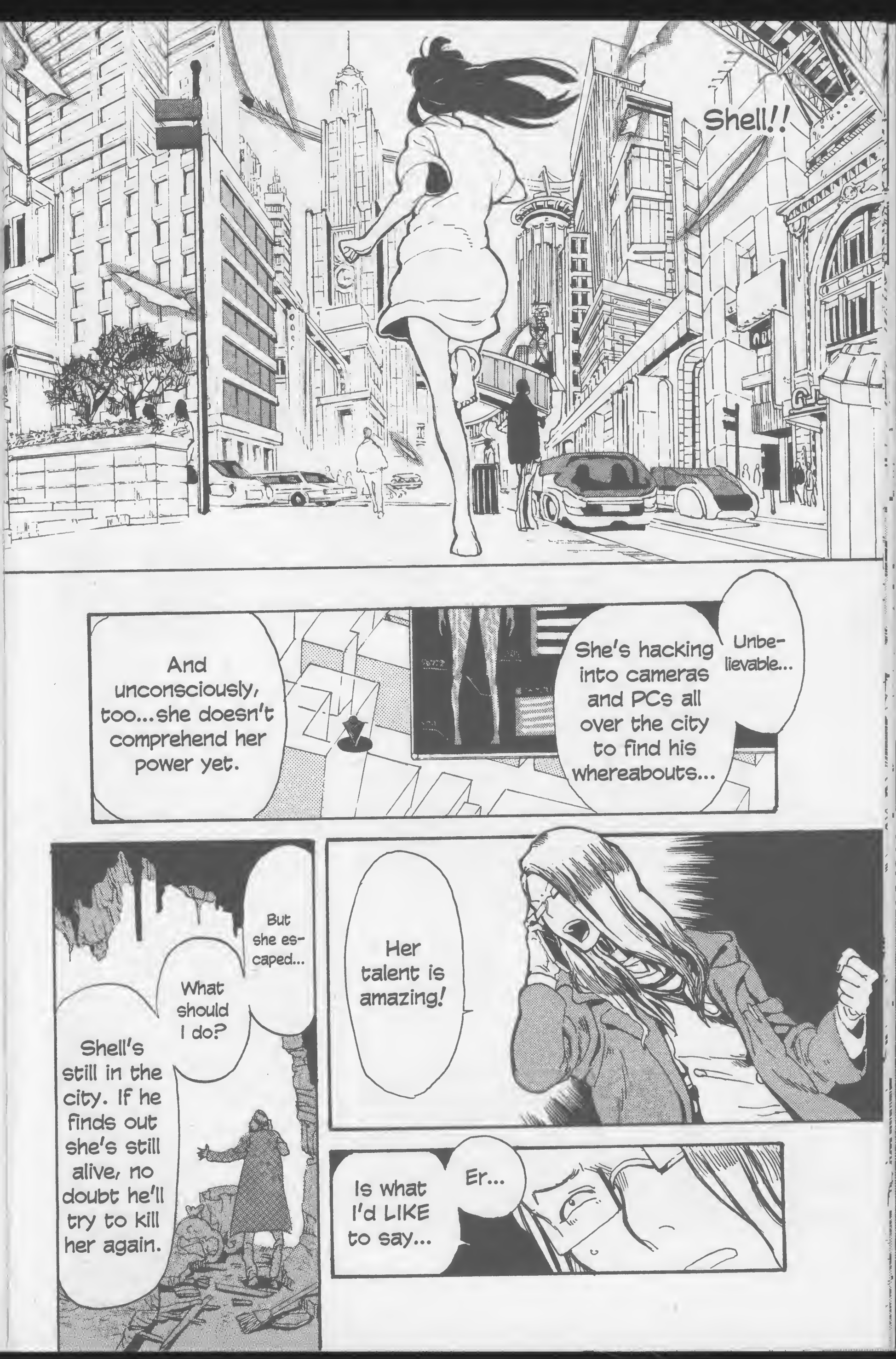

In order to save you, we had to confirm that it was your will.
While you were sleeping, we asked a question to your subconscious.
Do you want to die?
Or do you want to live?
And you answered...
I've never...
...thought I wanted to live.
Not even once!
Not even once!

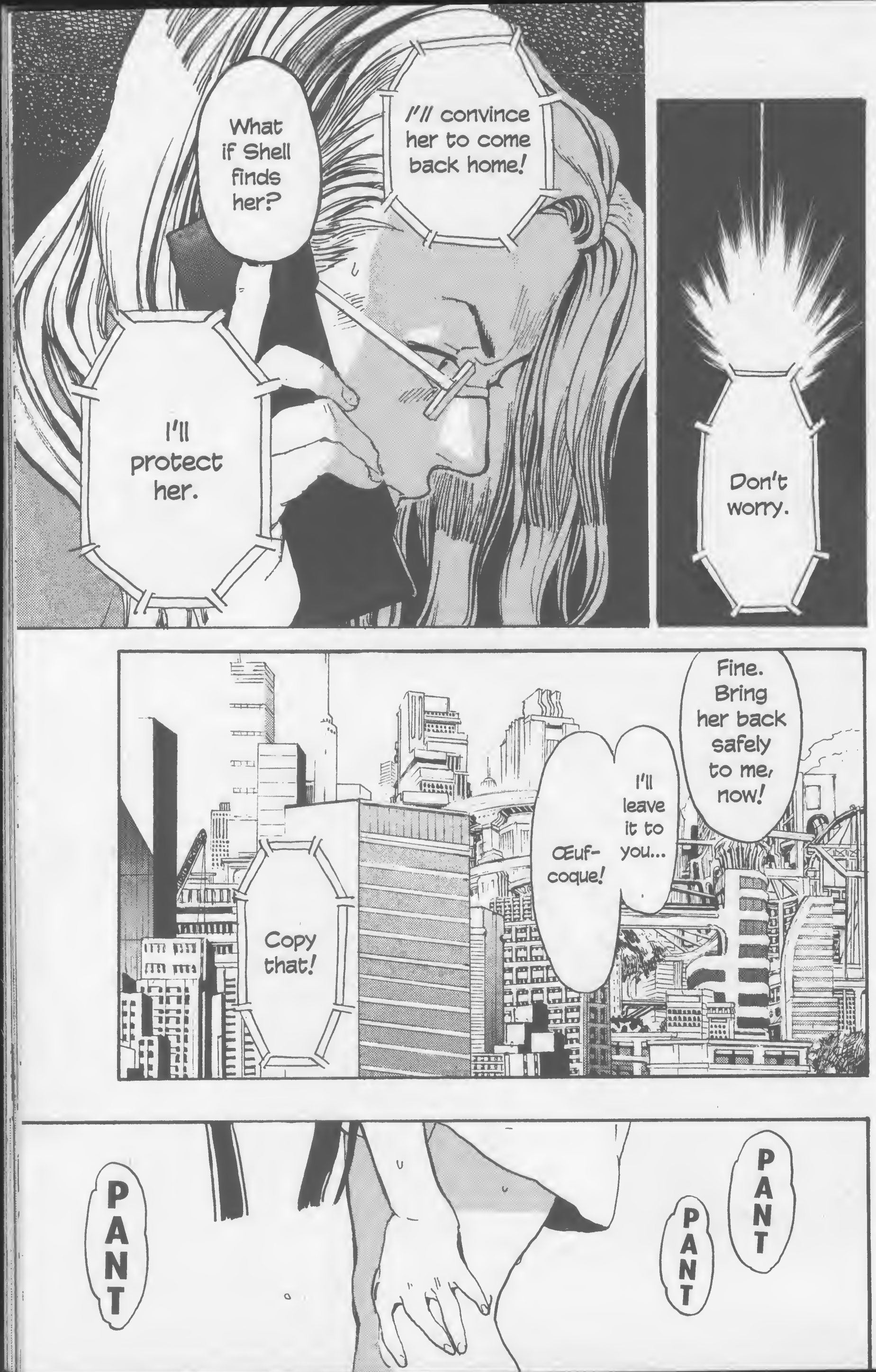

RUMBLE
W- What...
What's that sound?!
RUMBLE
If you won't open it...
...then I will.
FSSSH
RUMBLE
W- What the?!
KRSSSSHH
N- No way!
TAKA
TAKA
GASP

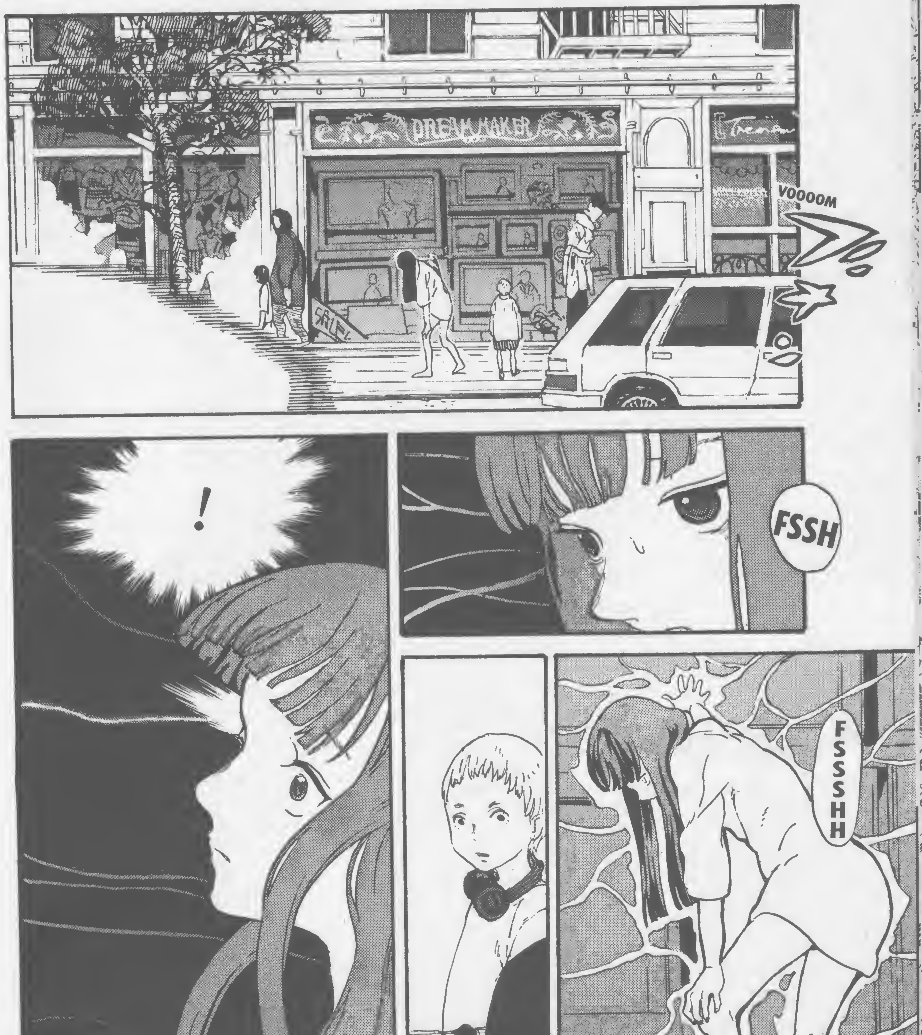


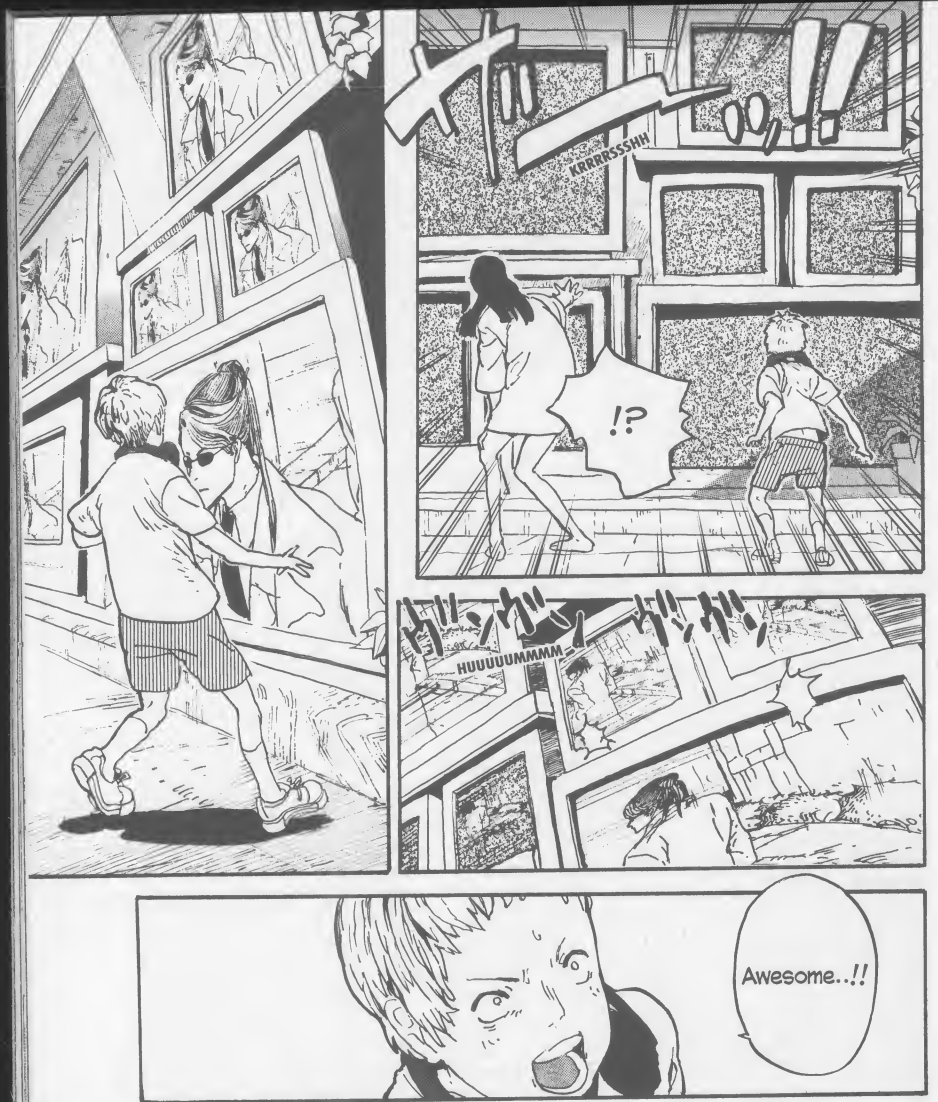

CRAAAASH
She used snark to control a car and crash it through the wall?!
Amazing...
THUNK
Ah!
No, Balot! Don't go outside!
......
Ahhhh!!
Wait, that's MY car!!

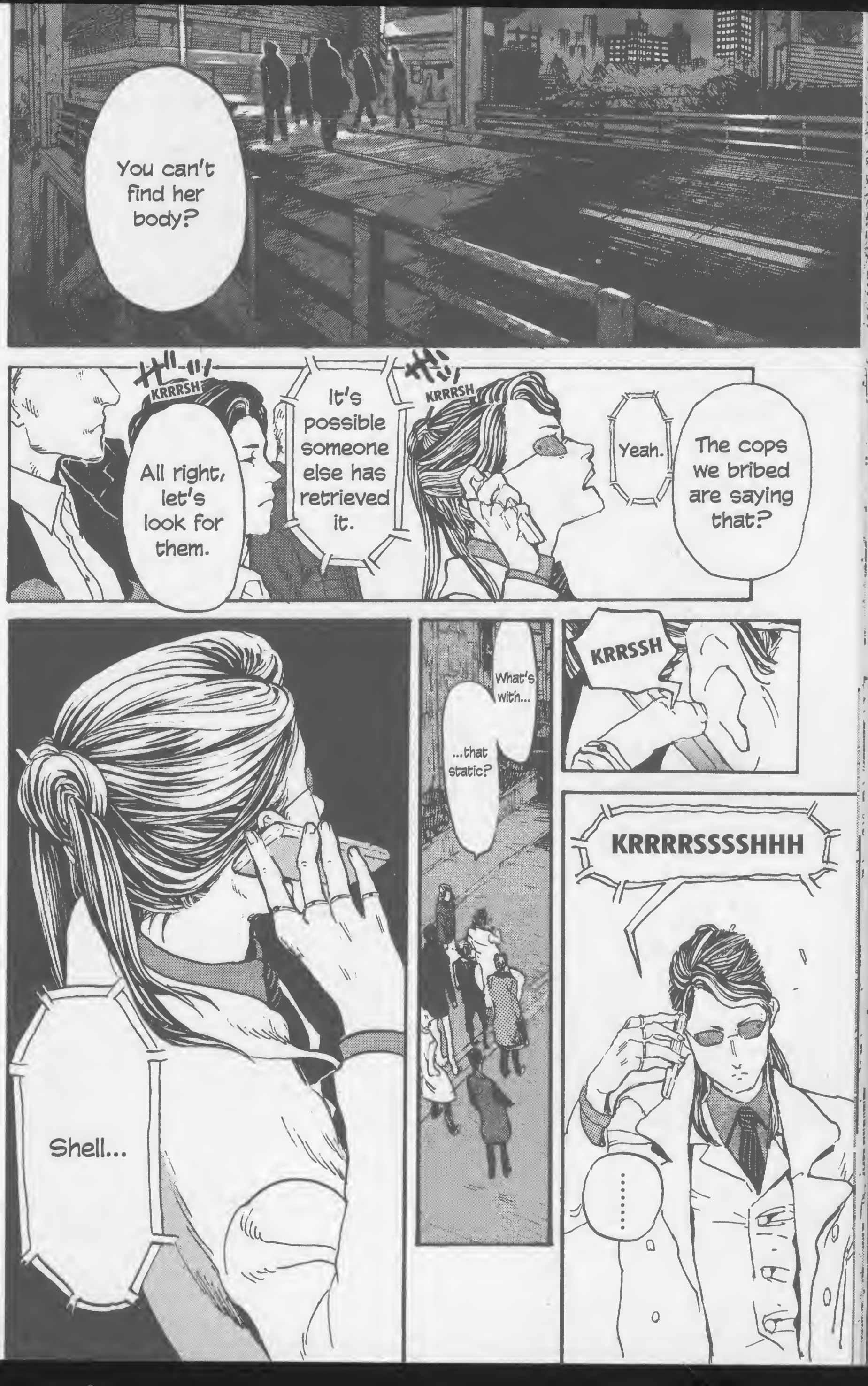

BLINK
Why, Shell?
Why did you try to kill me?
Where are you?
Shell!

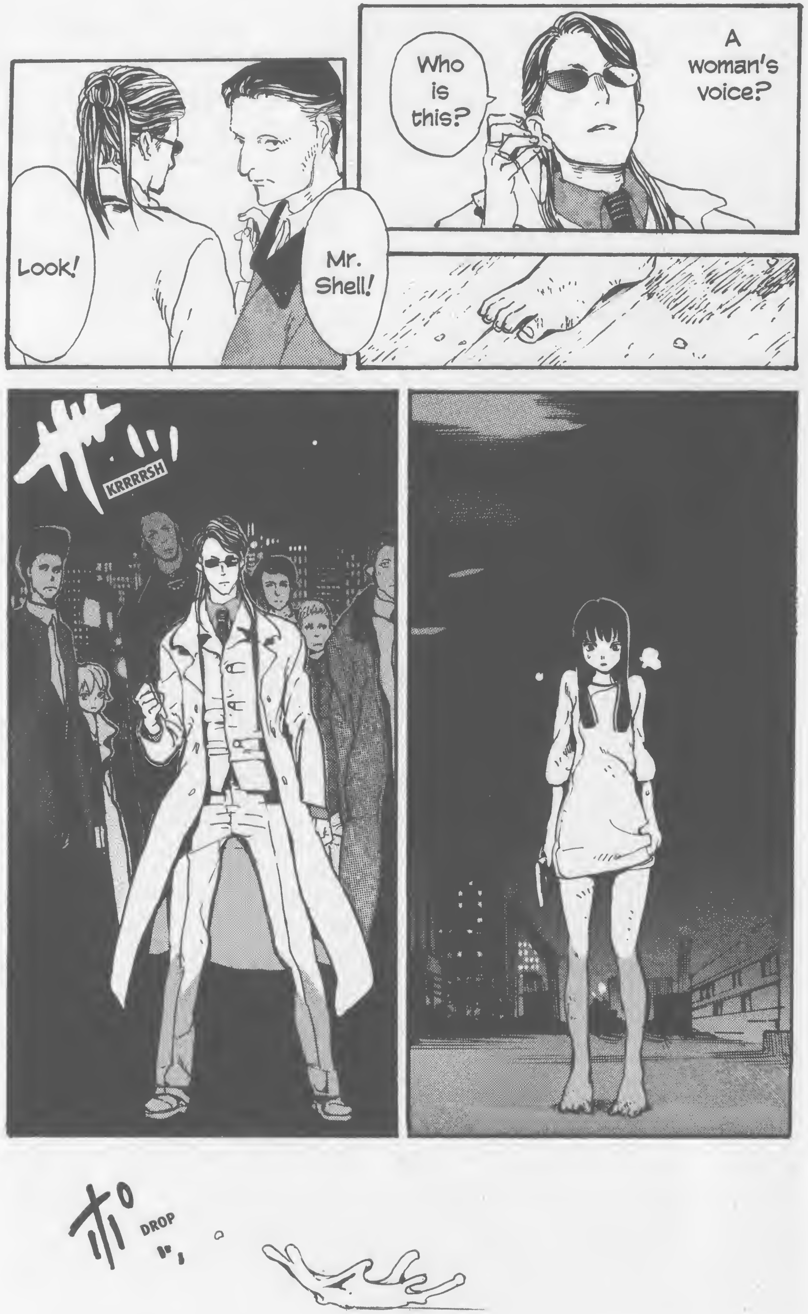

Shell!!
Unbe-lievable...
She's hacking into cameras and PCs all over the city to find his whereabouts...
And unconsciously, too...she doesn't comprehend her power yet.
Her talent is amazing!
But she escaped...
What should I do?
Shell's still in the city. If he finds out she's still alive, no doubt he'll try to kill her again.
Er...
Is what I'd LIKE to say...

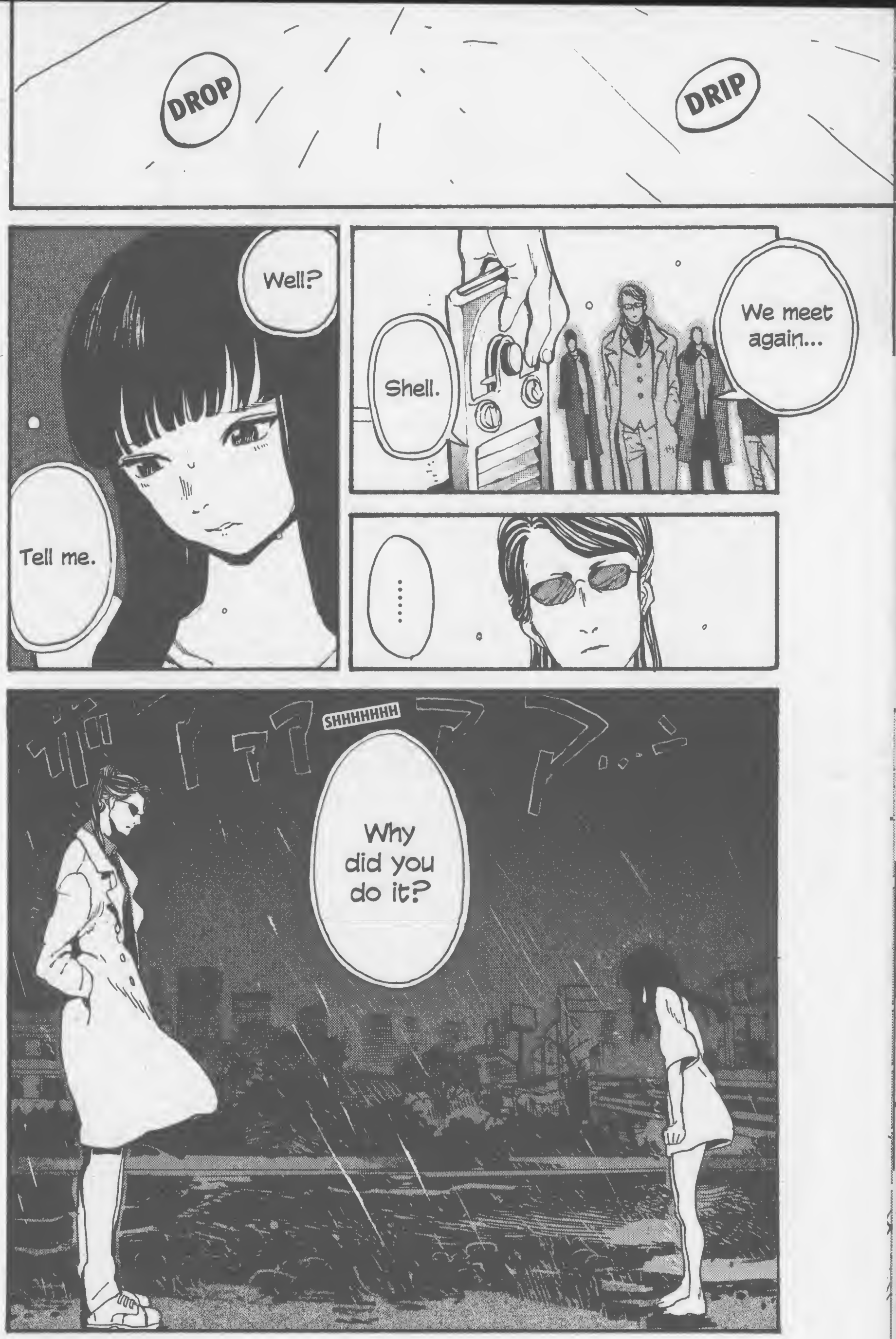

Don't worry.
I'll convince her to come back home!
What if Shell finds her?
I'll protect her.
Fine. Bring her back safely to me, now!
I'll leave it to you...
Œuf-coque!
Copy that!
PANT
PANT
PANT

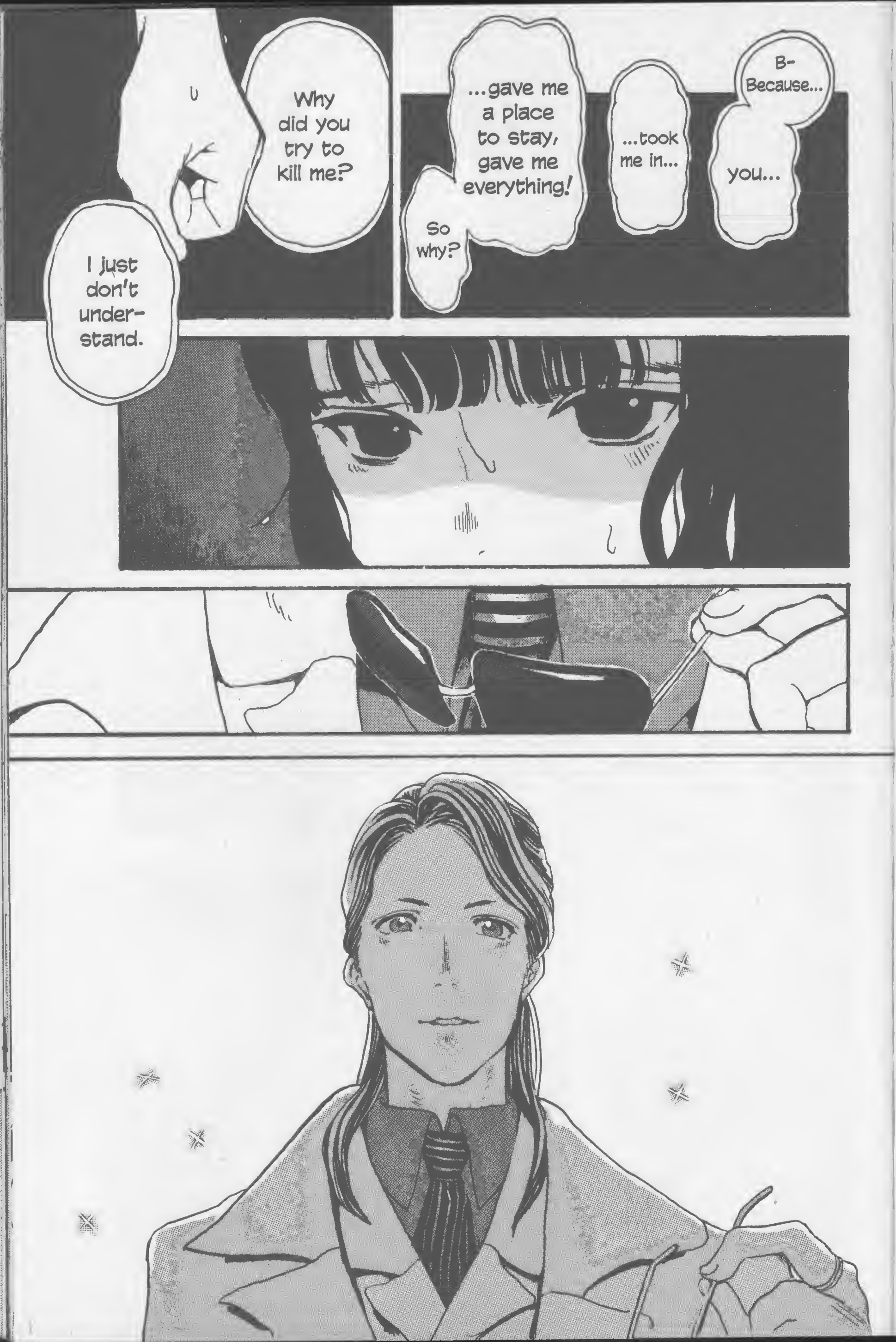

DREAMMAKER
VOOOOM
!
FSSH
49th Street's surveillance camera!
FSSSH
FSSSH

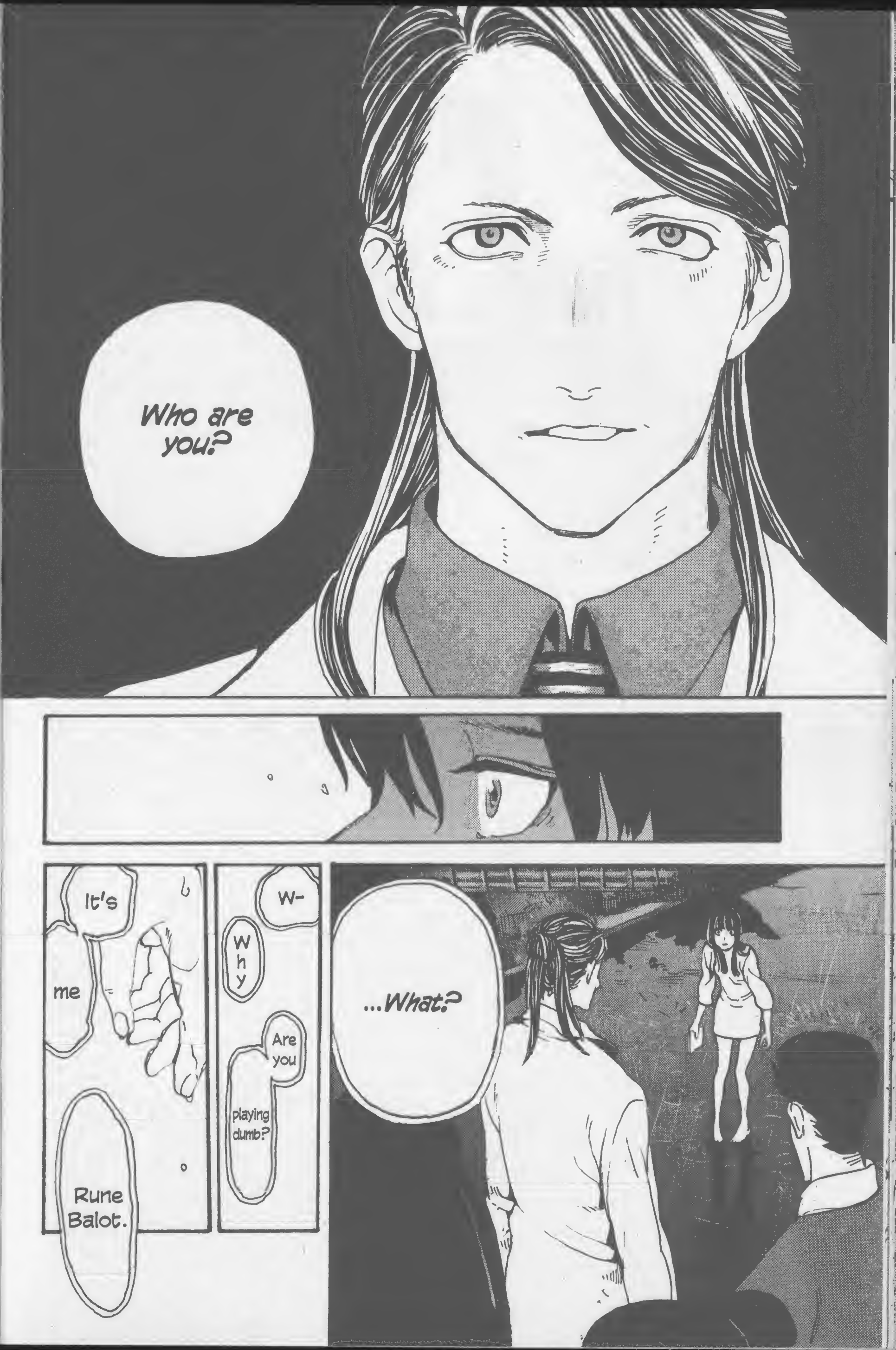

KRRRRSSSHH
!?
HUUUUUMMMM
Awesome..!!
Found you...
Shell...

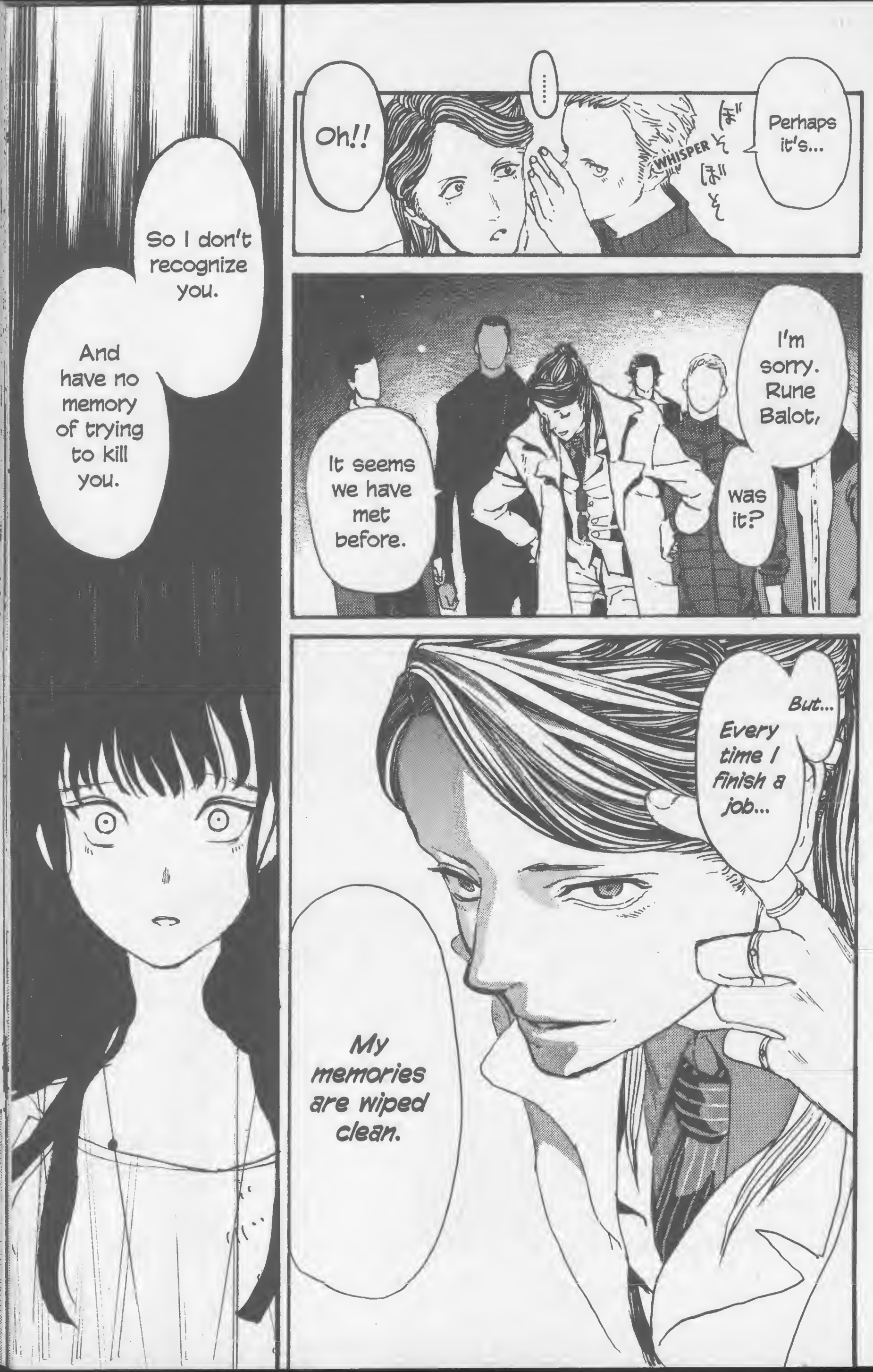

You can't find her body?
The cops we bribed are saying that?
Yeah.
KRRRSH
It's possible someone else has retrieved it.
KRRRSH
All right, let's look for them.
KRRSH
KRRRRSSSSHHH
......
What's with...
...that static?
Shell...

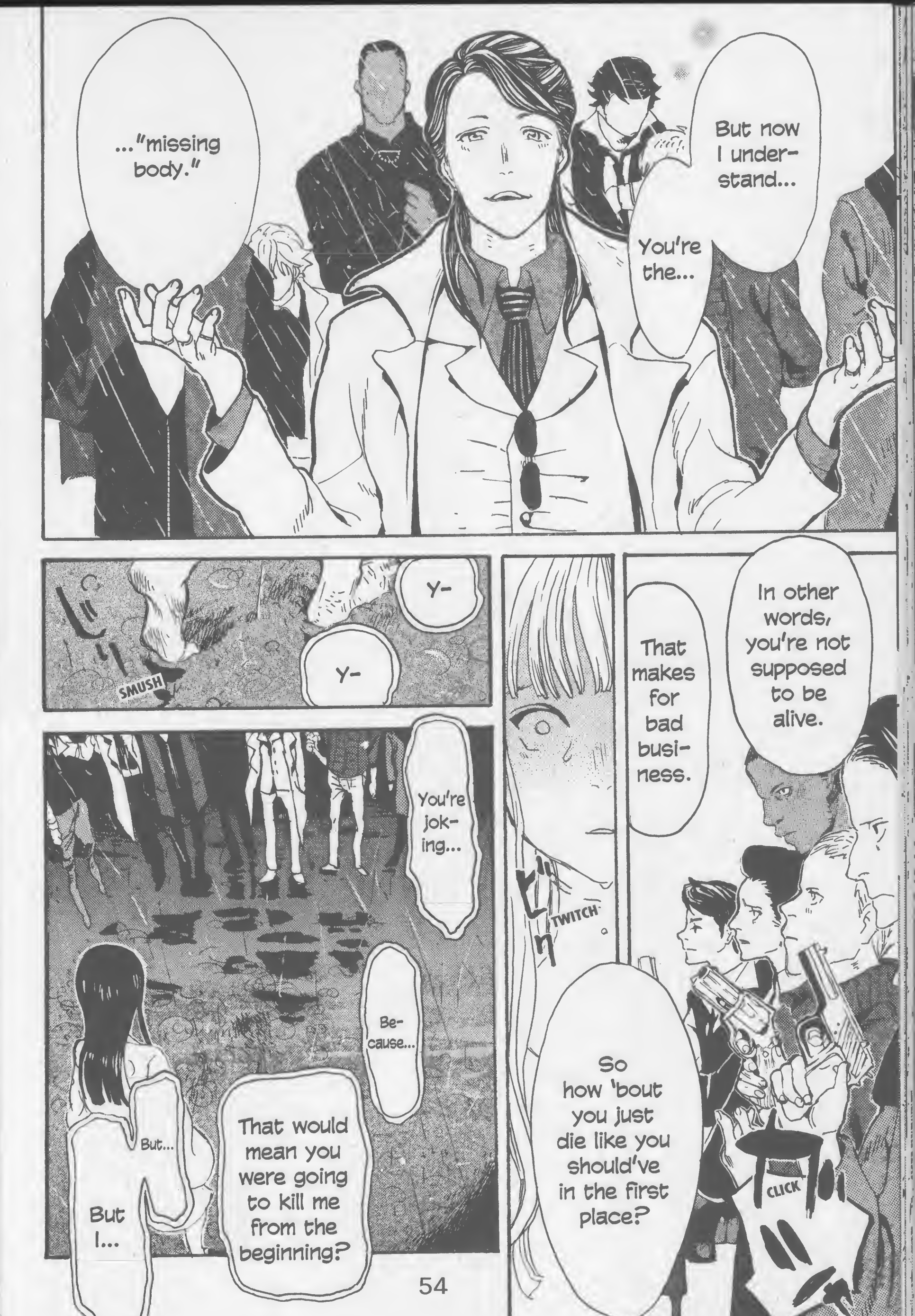

A woman's voice?
Who is this?
Mr. Shell!
Look!
KRRRRSH
DROP

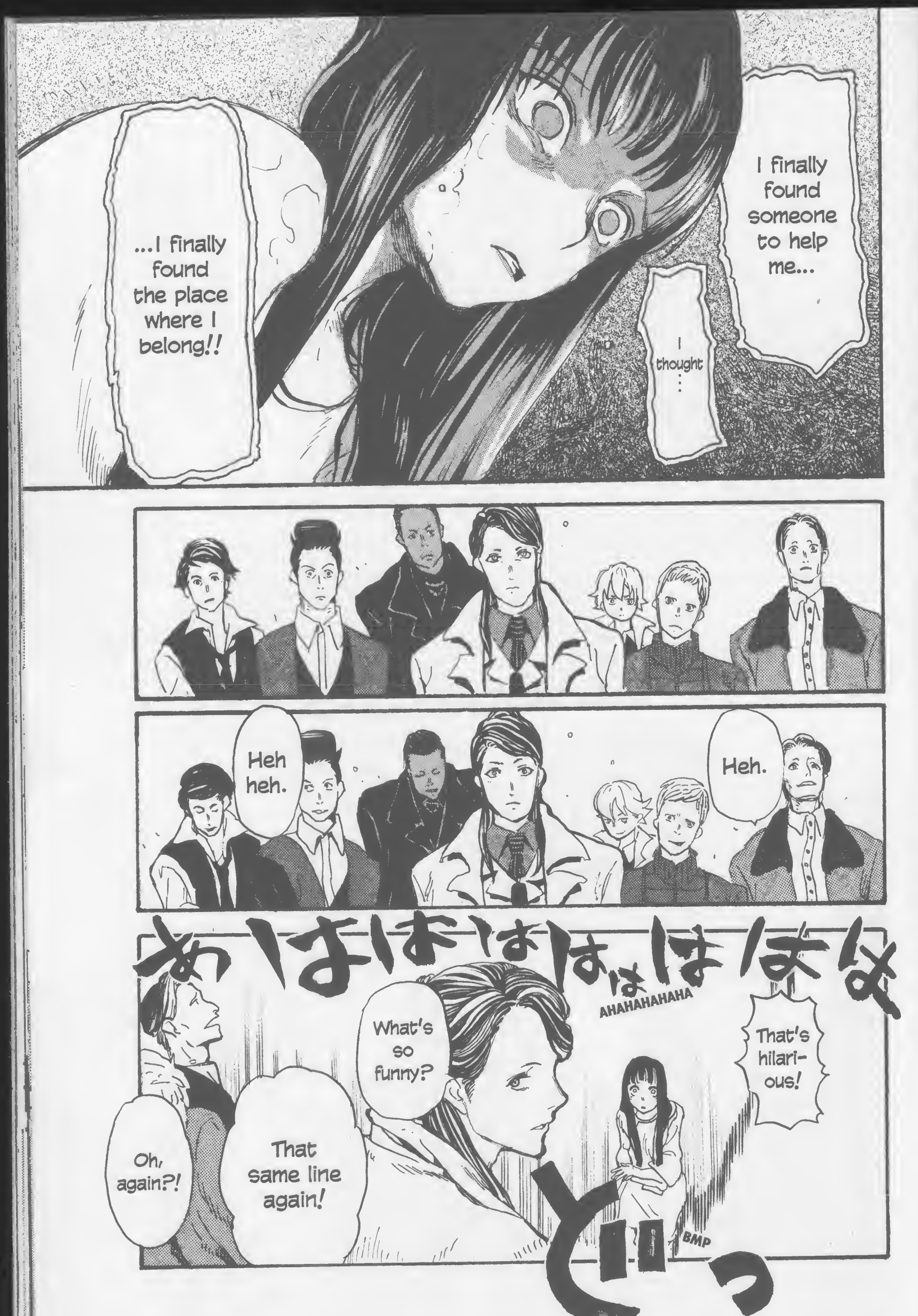

DRIP
DROP
We meet again...
Shell.
......
Well?
Tell me.
SHHHHHHH
Why did you do it?

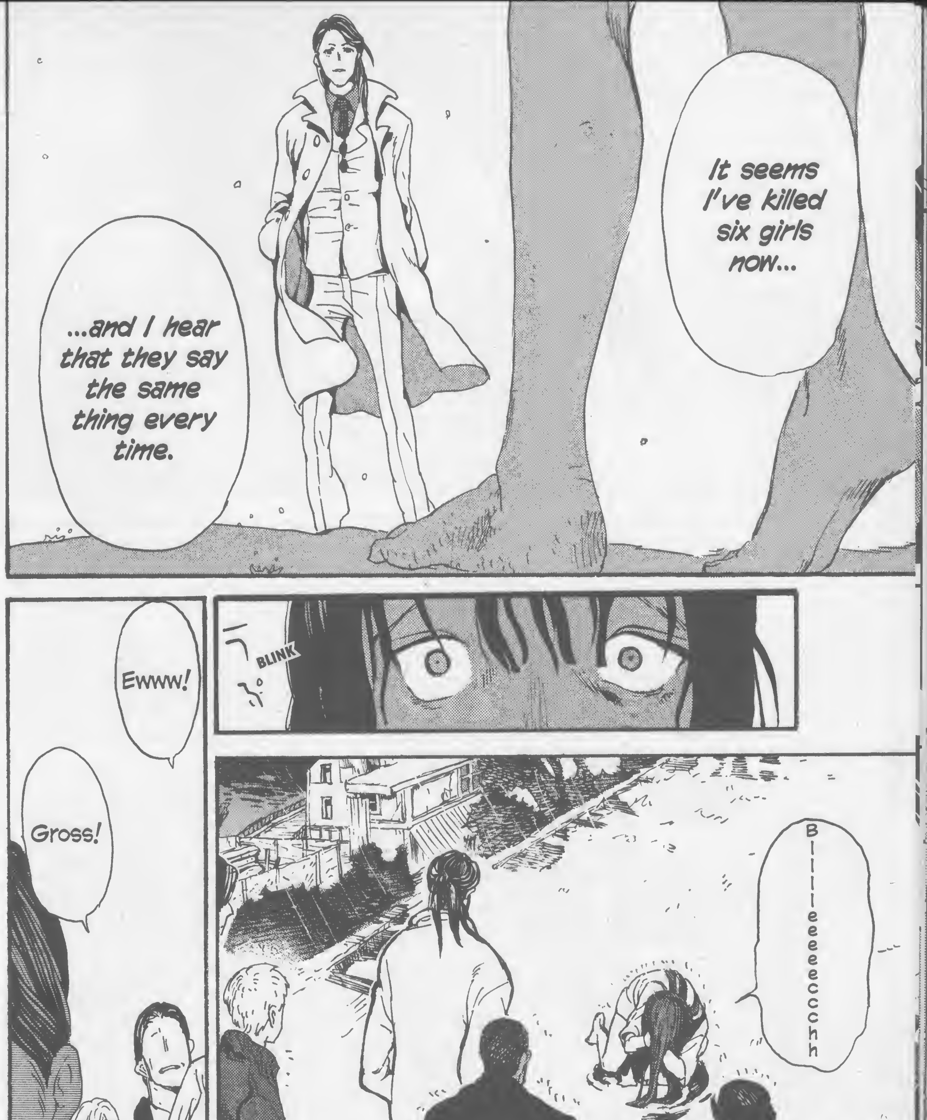

B-Because...
you...
...took me in...
...gave me a place to stay, gave me everything!
So why?
Why did you try to kill me?
I just don't understand.

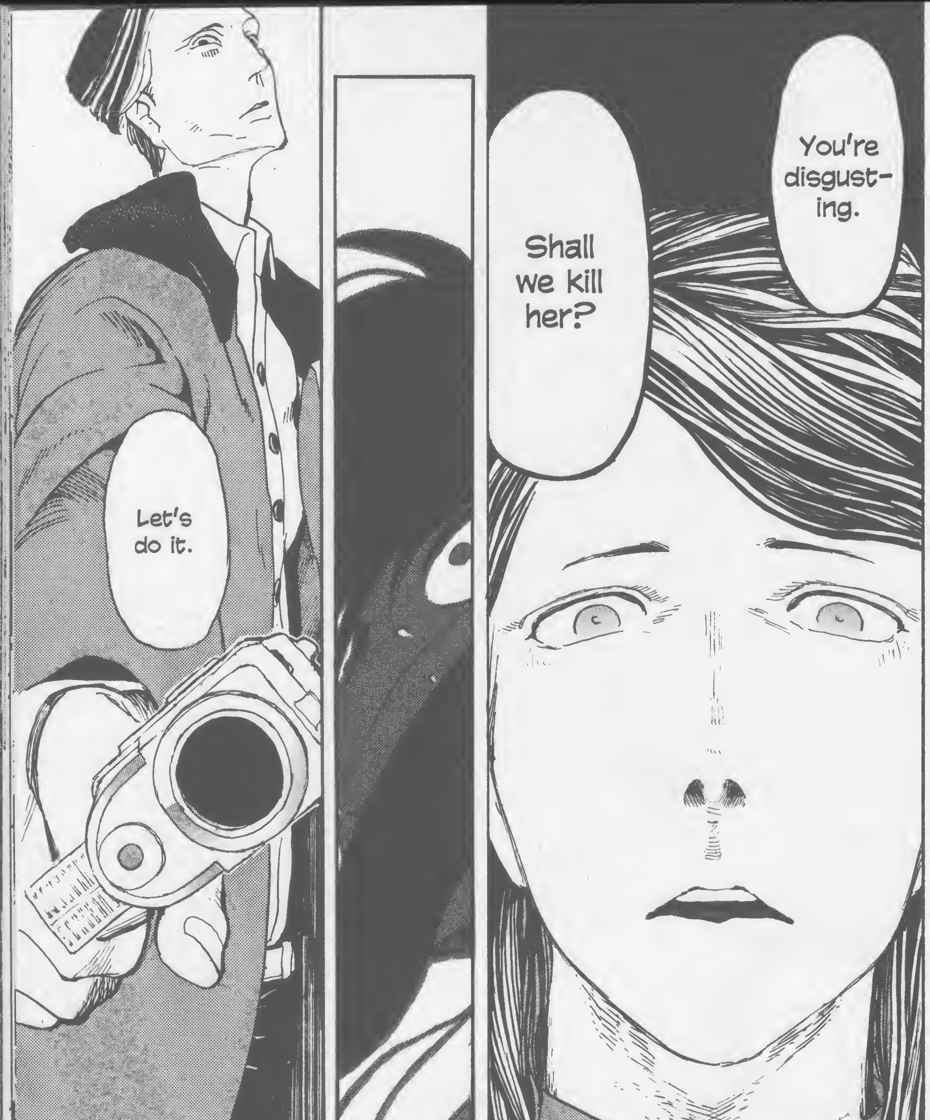

Who are you?
...What?
W-
Why
Are you playing dumb?
It's
me
Rune Balot.

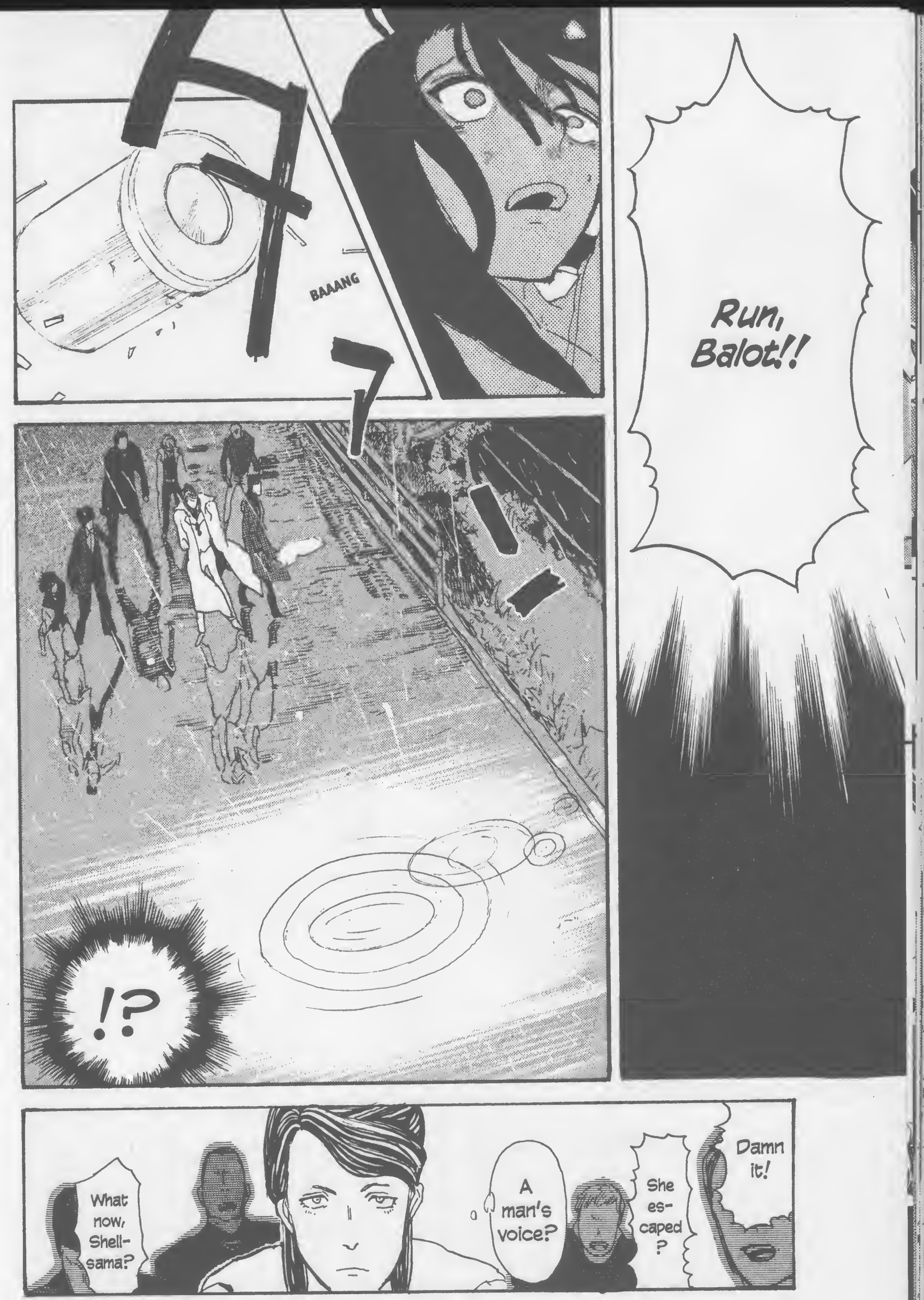

Perhaps it's...
WHISPER
ぼそぼそ
……
Oh!!
I'm sorry. Rune Balot,
was it?
It seems we have met before.
But...
Every time I finish a job...
My memories are wiped clean.
So I don't recognize you.
And have no memory of trying to kill you.

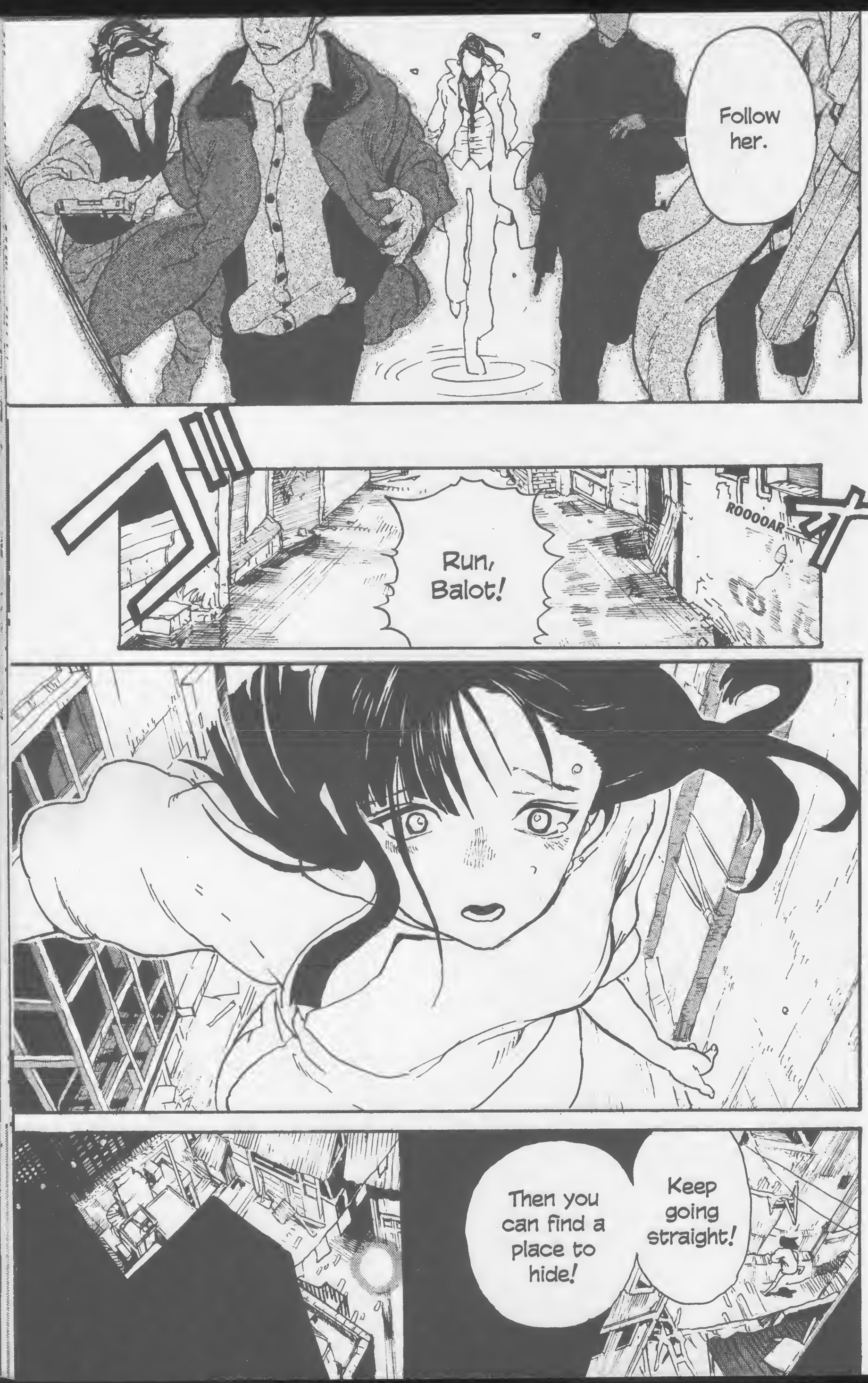

But now I understand...
You're the...
..."missing body."
In other words, you're not supposed to be alive.
That makes for bad business.
TWITCH
Y-
Y-
SMUSH
So how 'bout you just die like you should've in the first place?
CLICK
You're joking...
Because...
That would mean you were going to kill me from the beginning?
But...
But I...

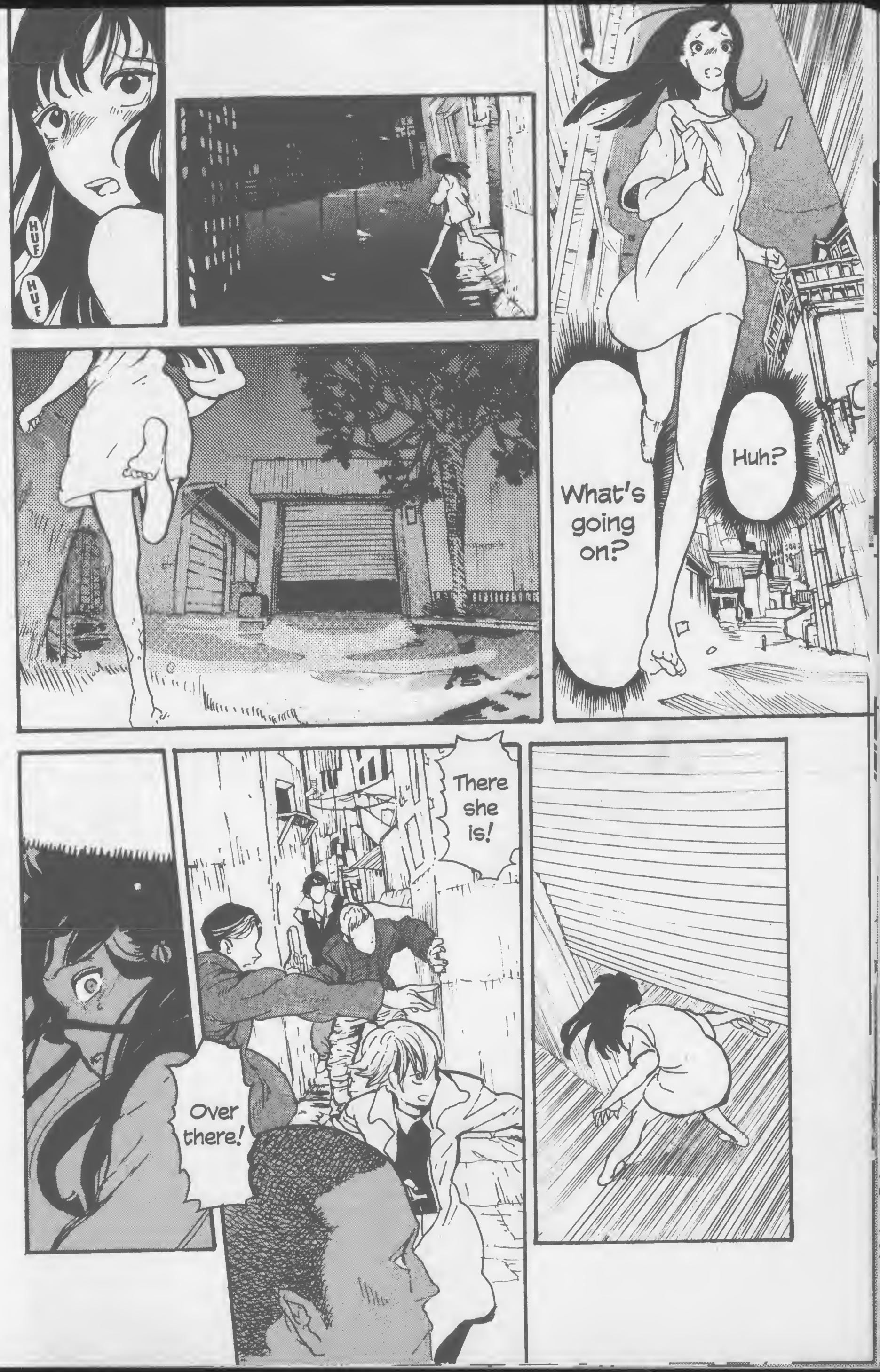

I finally found someone to help me...
I thought...
...I finally found the place where I belong!!
Heh.
Heh heh.
あははははははは
AHAHAHAHAHA
That's hilarious!
What's so funny?
That same line again!
Oh, again?!
どっ
BMP

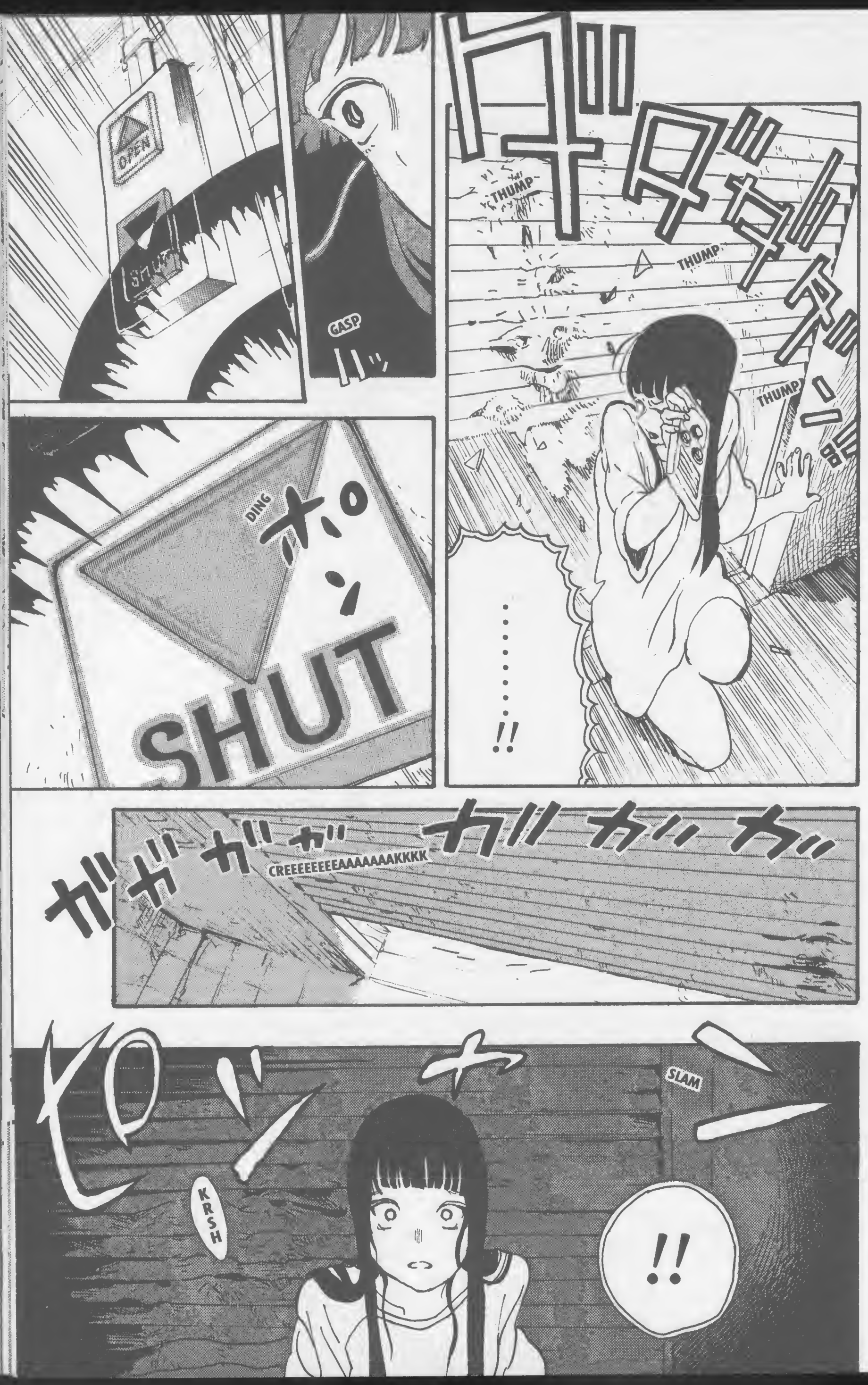

It seems I've killed six girls now...
...and I hear that they say the same thing every time.
BLINK
Ewww!
Bllleeeeecchh
Gross!
......

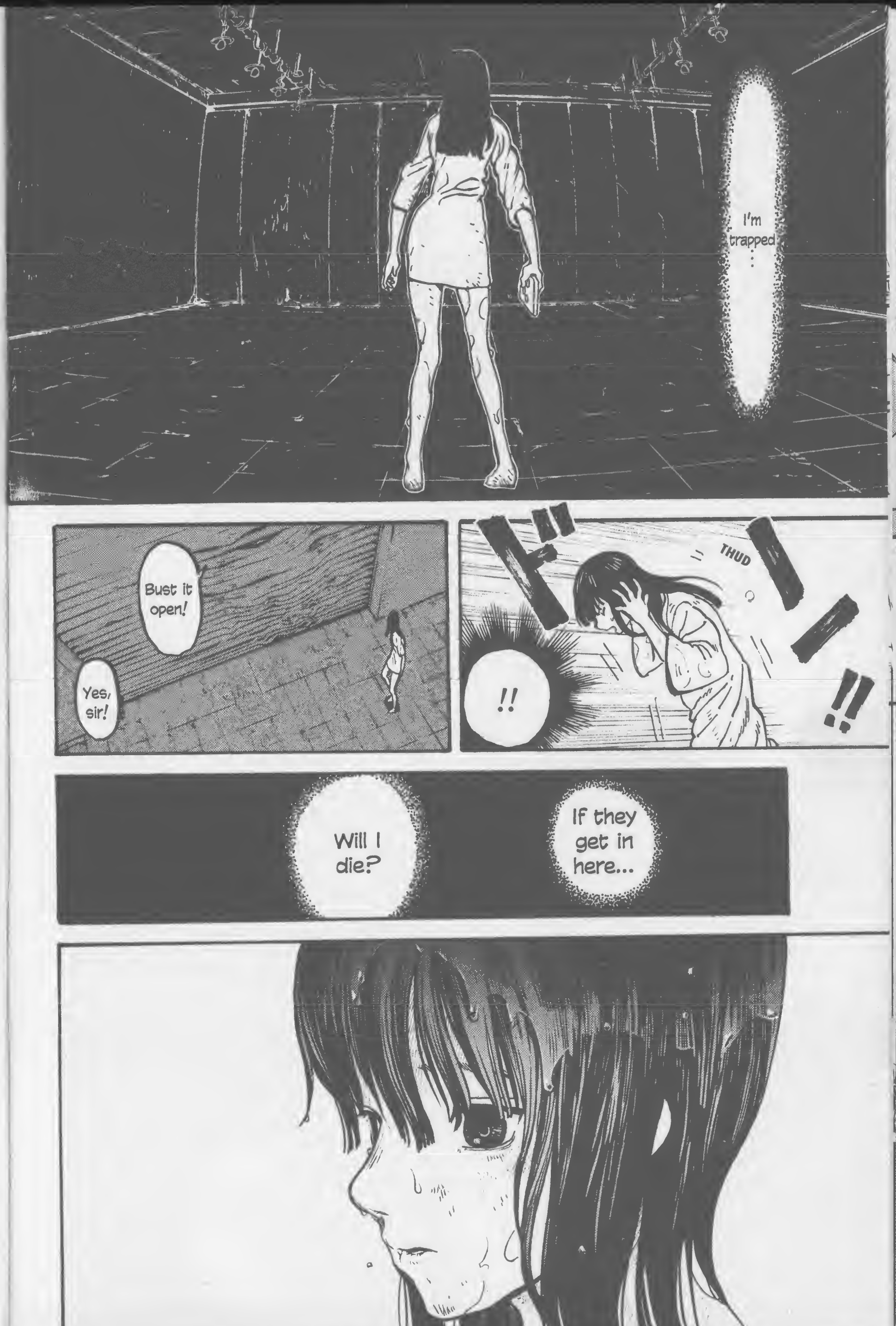

You're disgusting.
Shall we kill her?
Let's do it.
CLICK

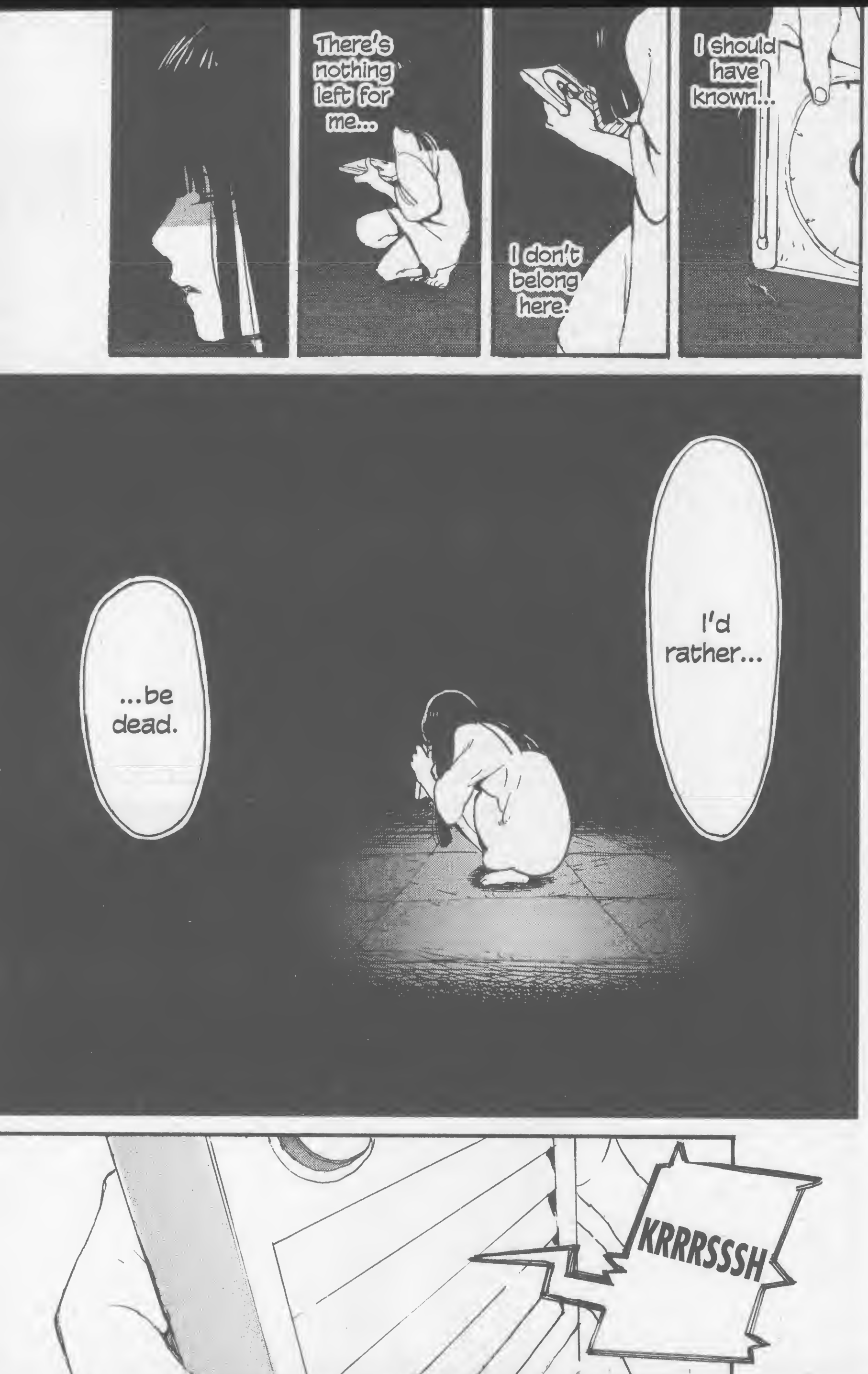

BAAANG
Run, Balot!!
!?
Damn it!
She escaped?
A man's voice?
What now, Shell-sama?

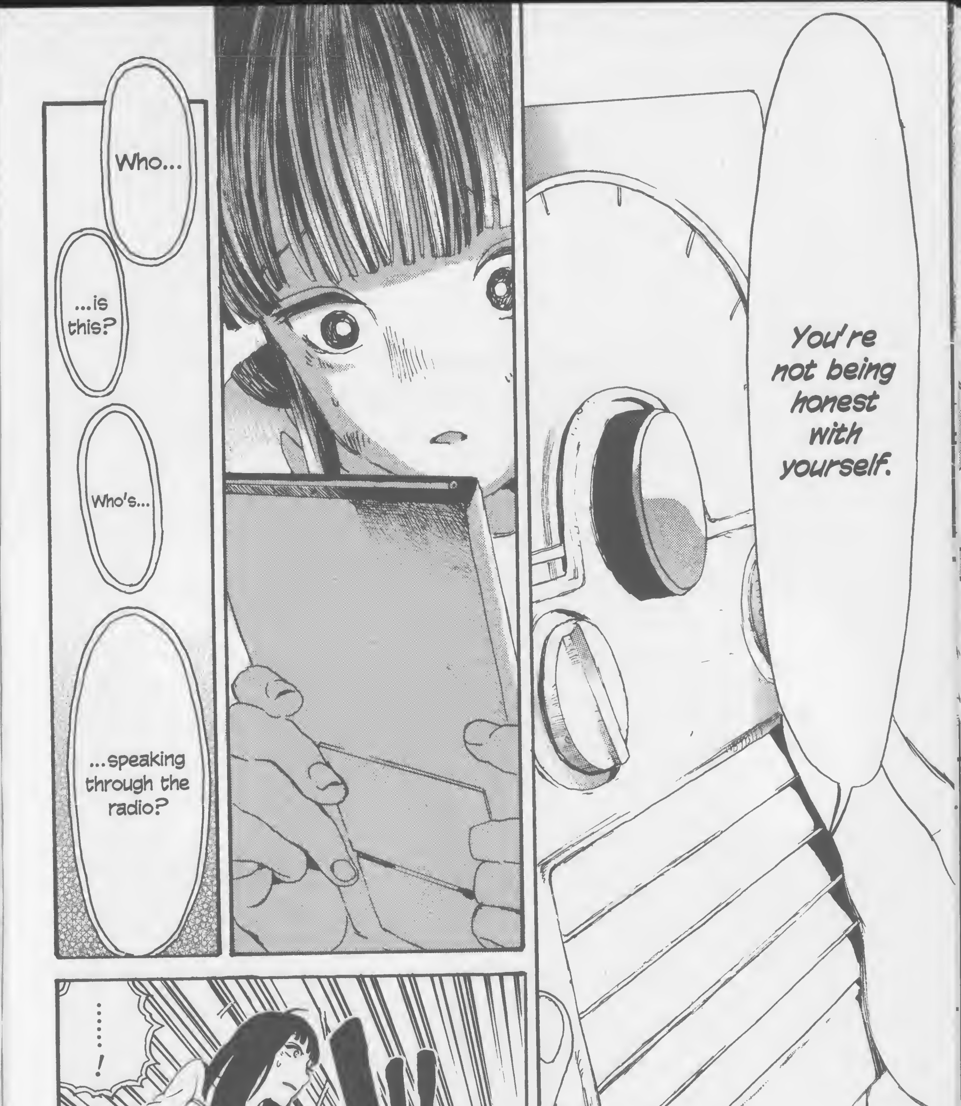

Follow her.
ROOOOAR
Run, Balot!
Keep going straight!
Then you can find a place to hide!

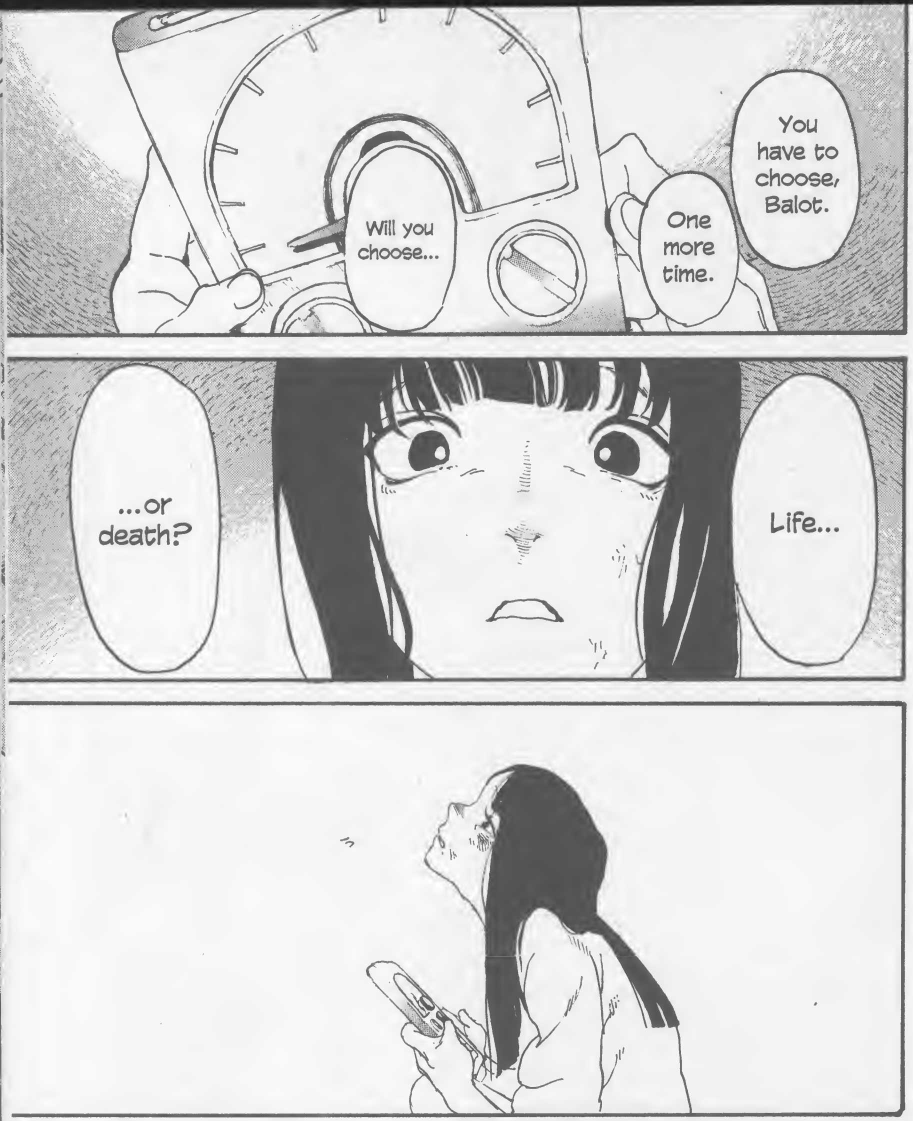

Huh?
What's going on?
HUF
HUF
There she is!
Over there!

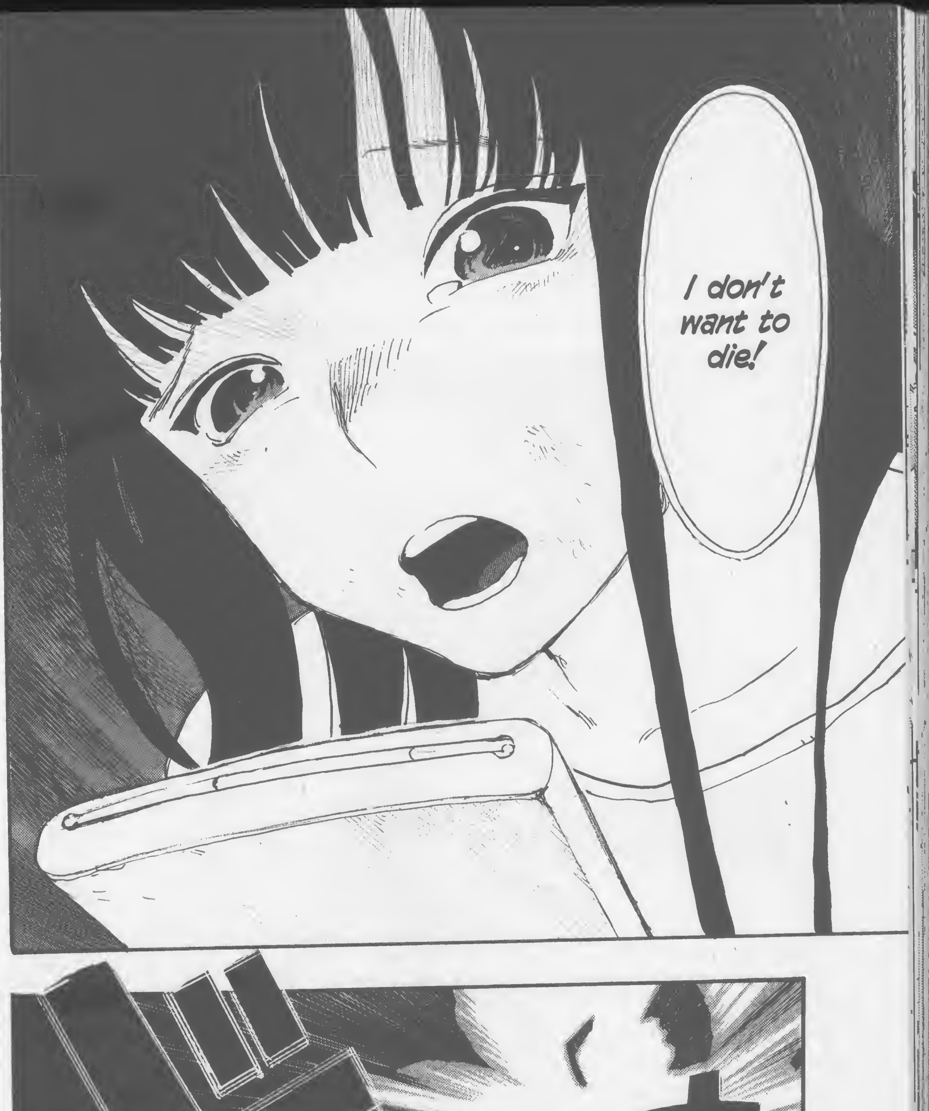

THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
……
!!
OPEN
SHUT
GASP
DING
SHUT
CREEEEEEEEAAAAAAAAKKKK
SLAM
KRSH
!!

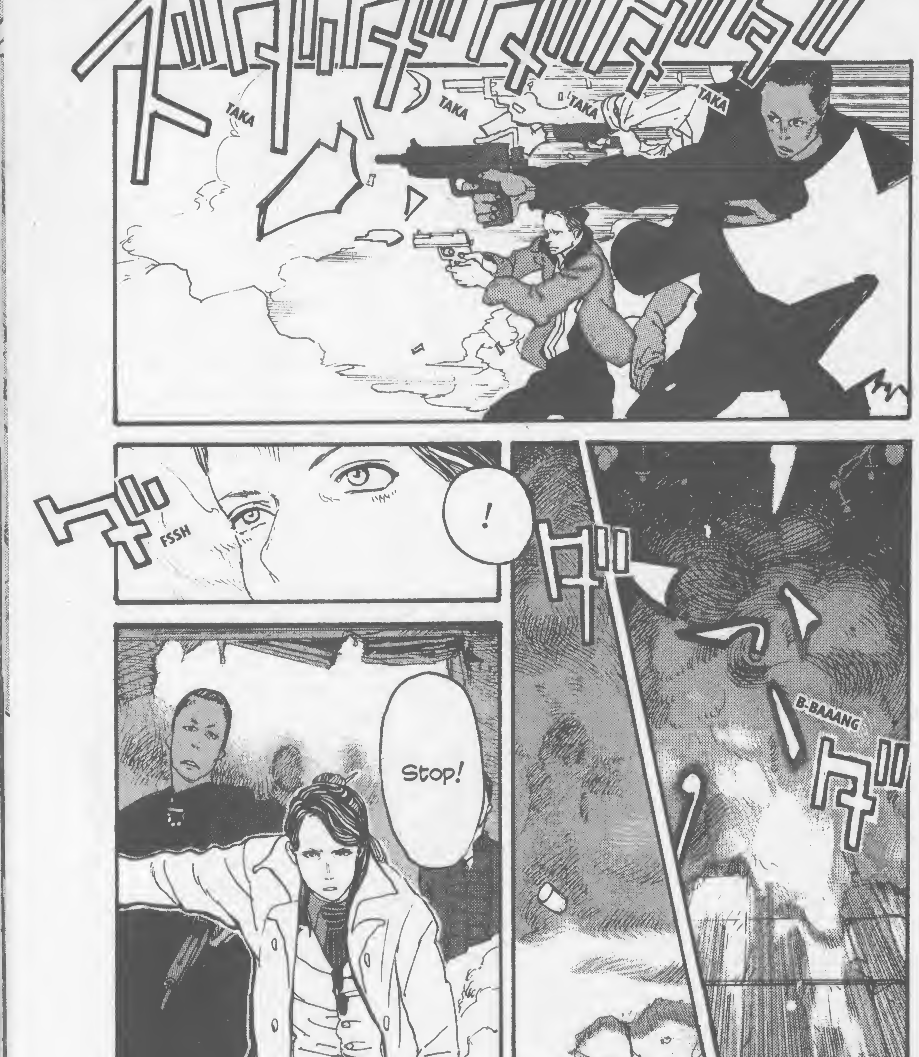

I'm trapped...
!!
THUD
!!
!!
Bust it open!
Yes, sir!
If they get in here...
Will I die?

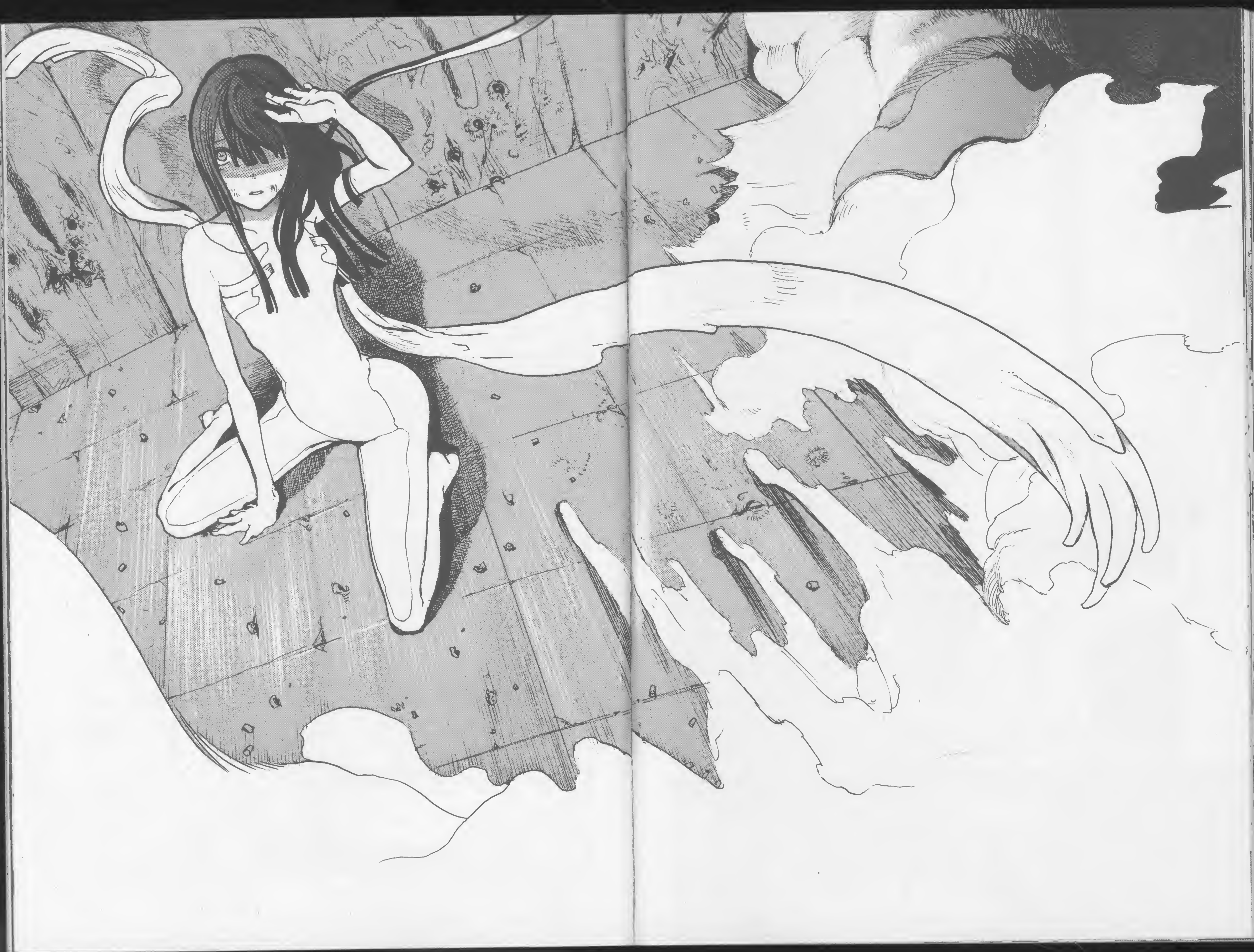

I should have known...
I don't belong here.
There's nothing left for me...
I'd rather...
...be dead.
KRRRSSSH

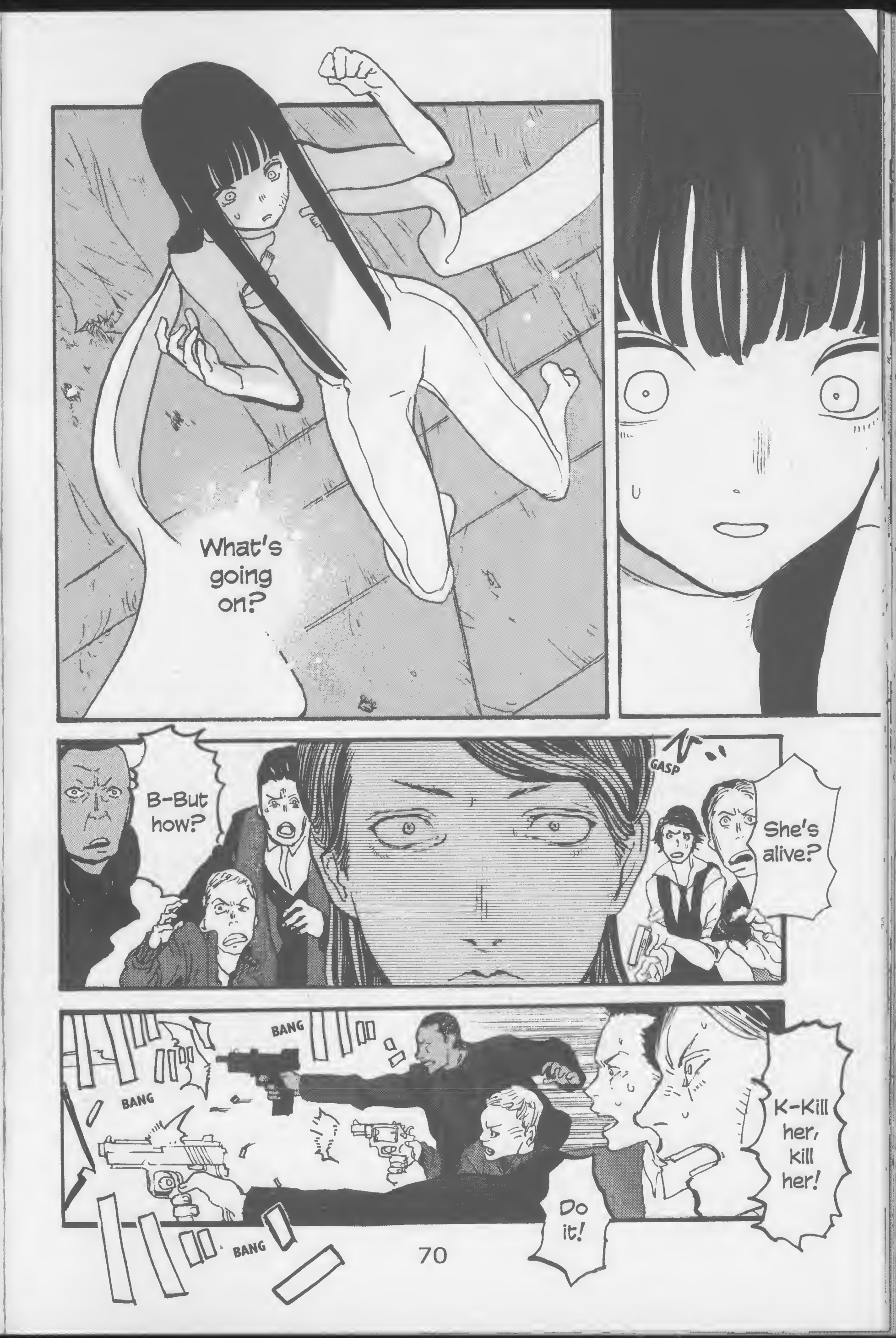

You're not being honest with yourself.
Who...
...is this?
Who's...
...speaking through the radio?
......!
BANG
We're almost in!

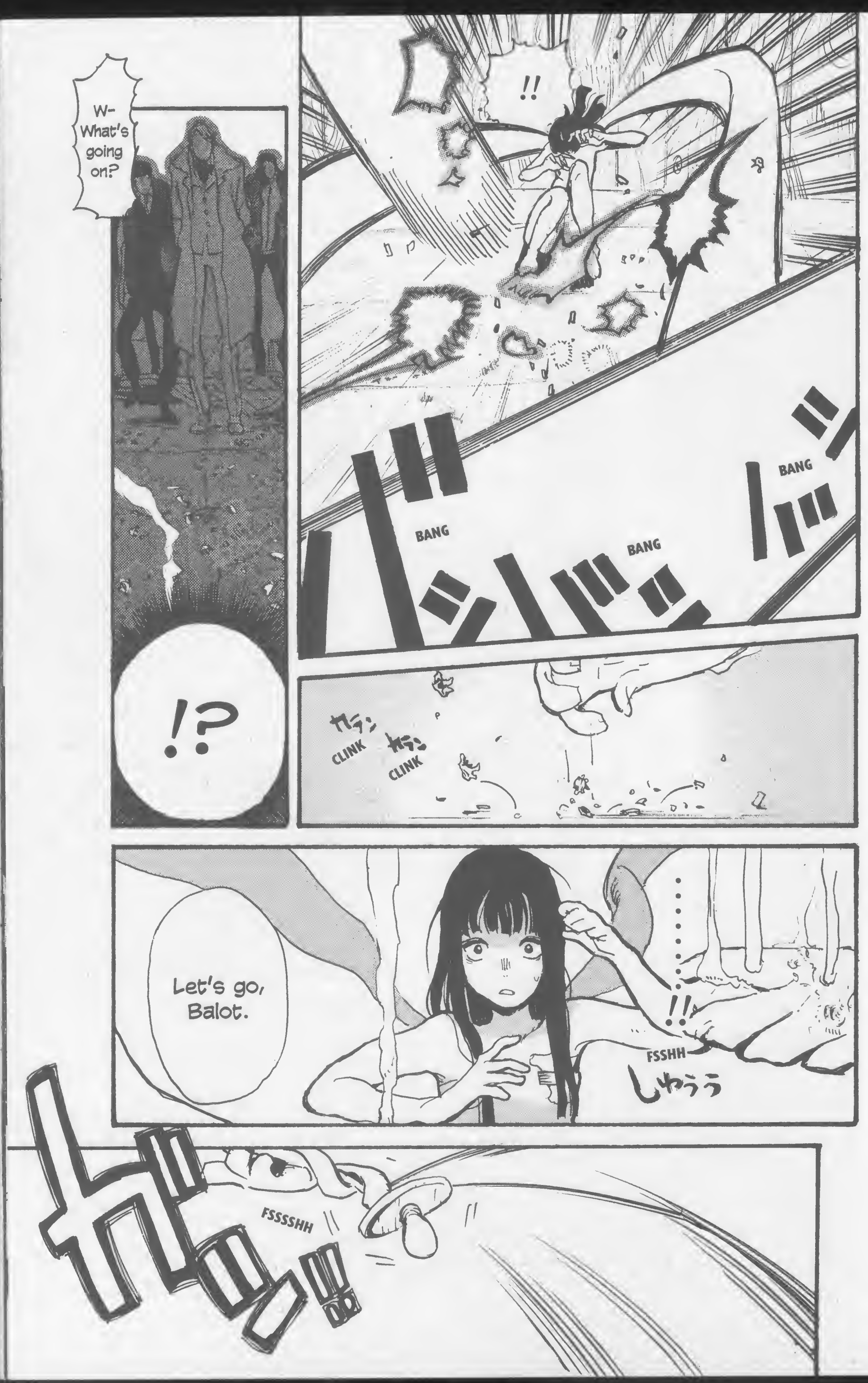

You have to choose, Balot.
One more time.
Will you choose...
Life...
...or death?
I...

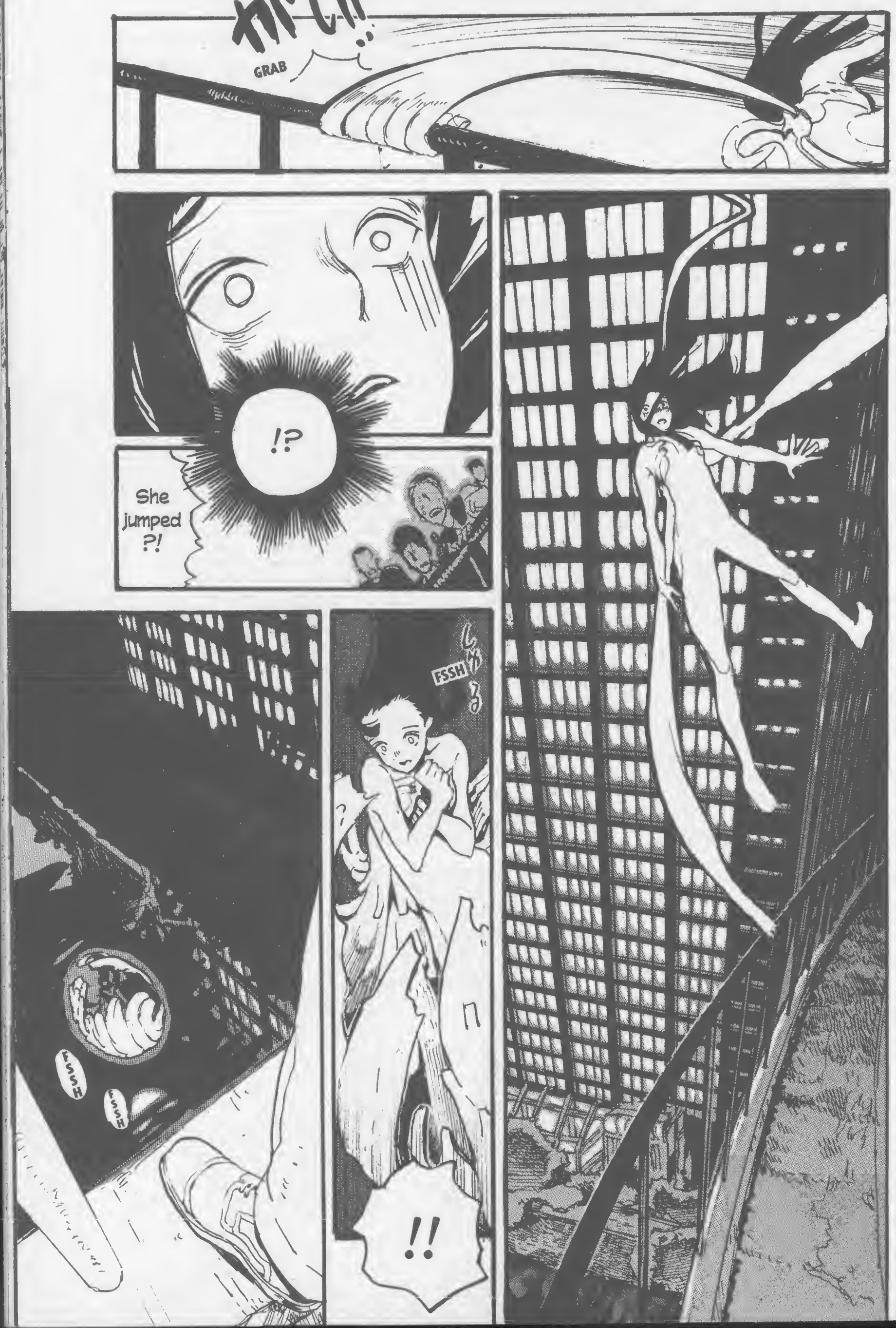

I don't want to die!
CRAAAAASH

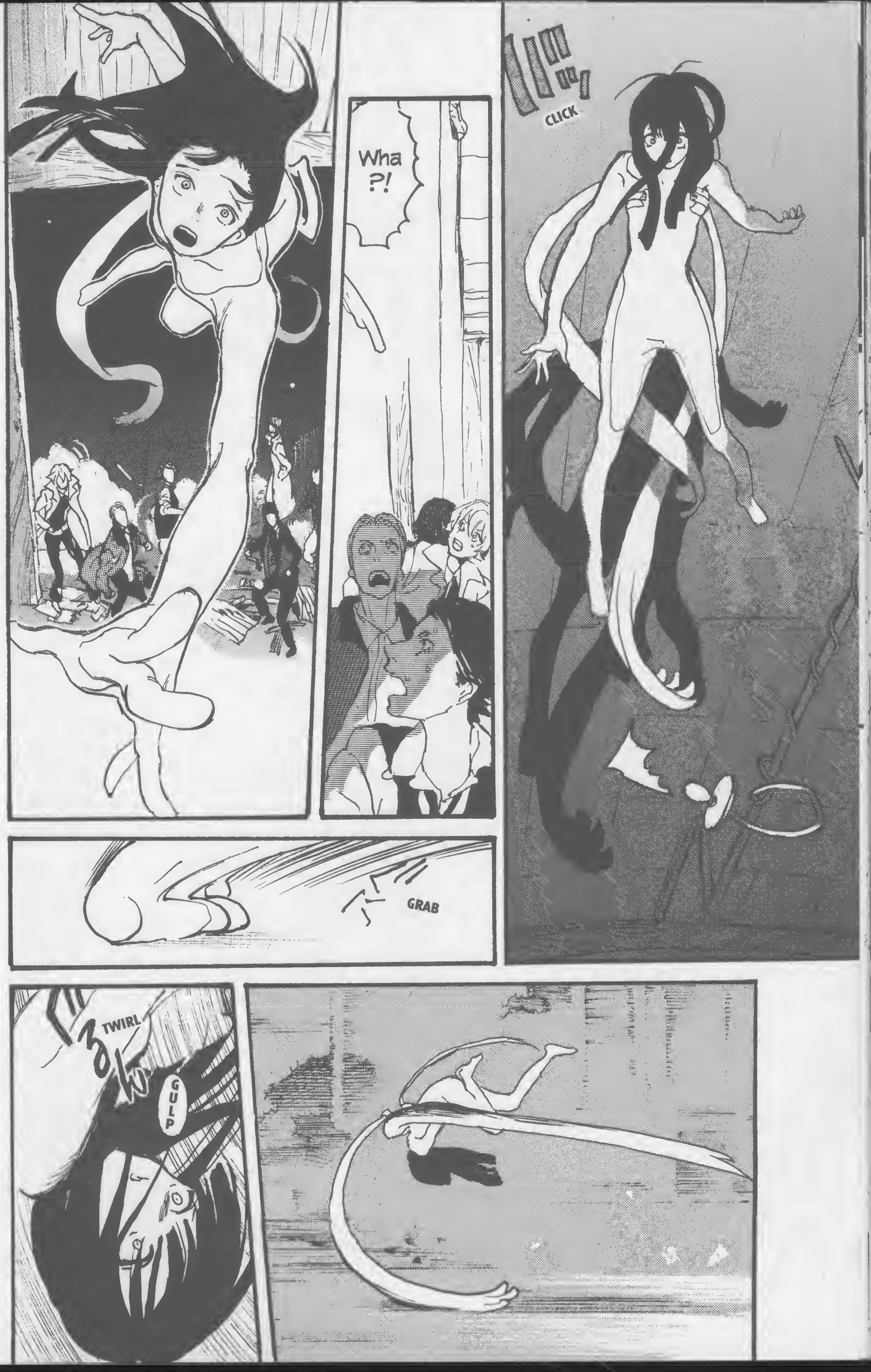

TAKA
TAKA
TAKA
TAKA
B-BAAANG
!
FSSH
Stop!

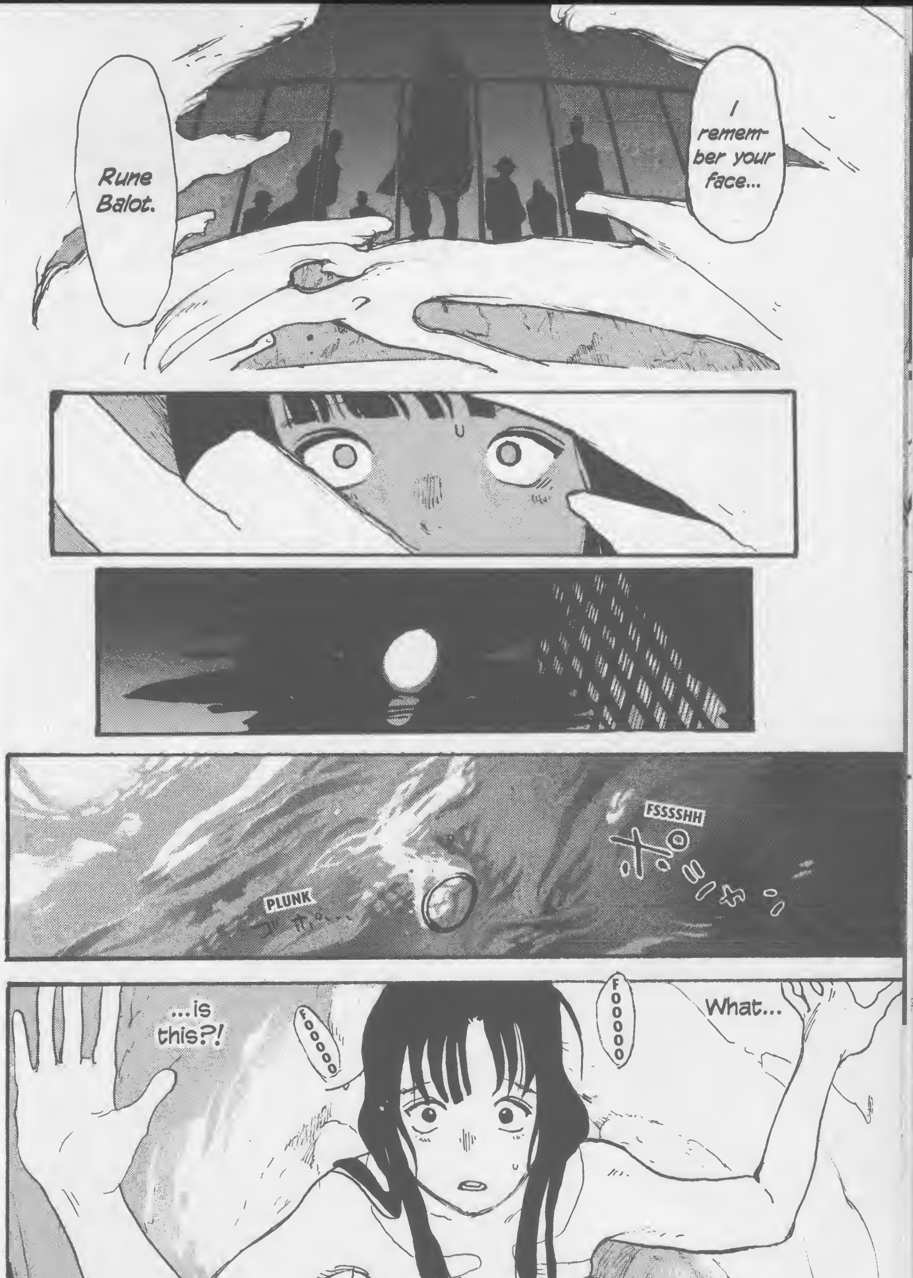


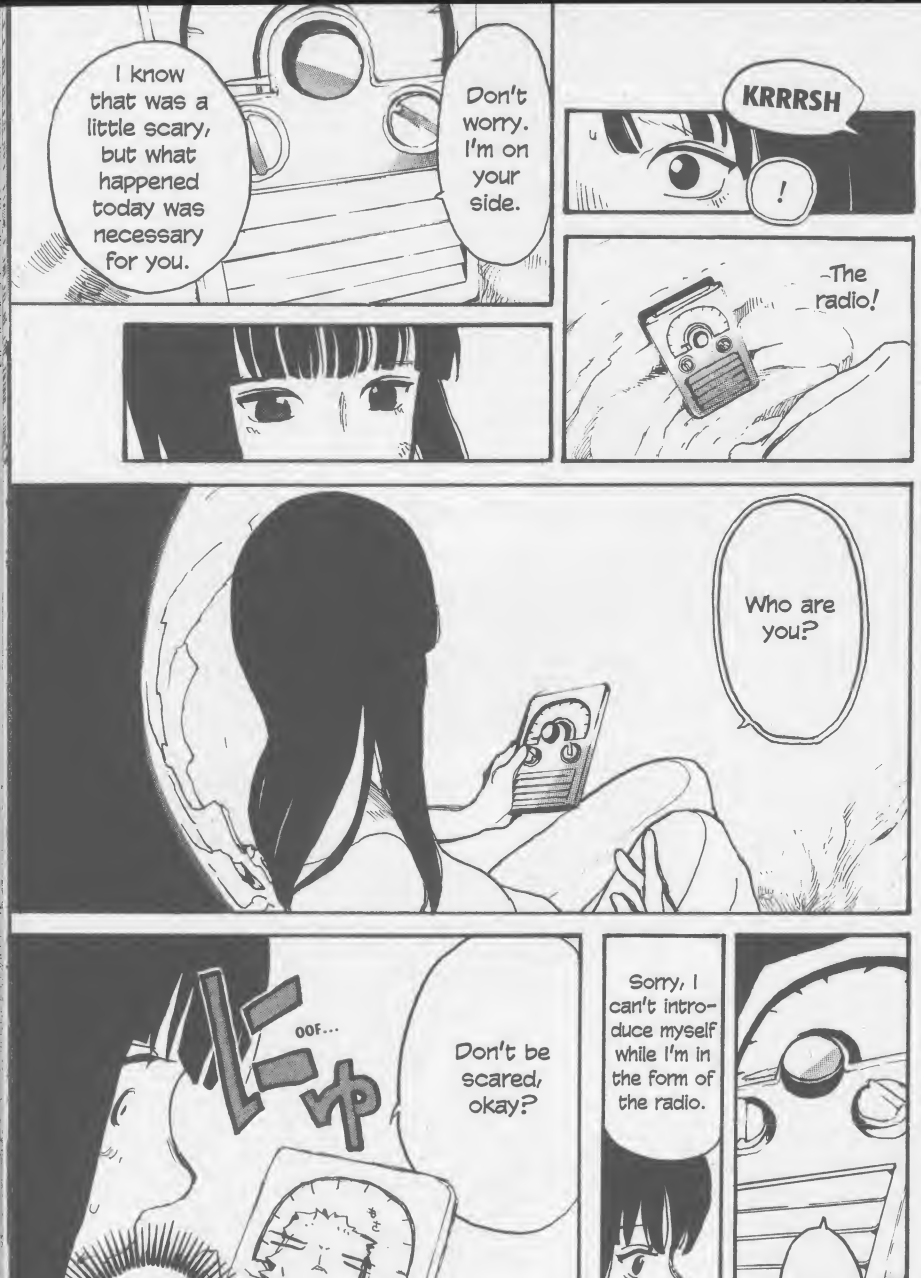

What's going on?
GASP
She's alive?
B-But how?
K-Kill her, kill her!
BANG
BANG
Do it!
BANG


!!
BANG
BANG
BANG
W- What's going on?
!?
カラン CLINK
カラン CLINK
!!
FSSHH しゅうう
Let's go, Balot.
FSSSSHH

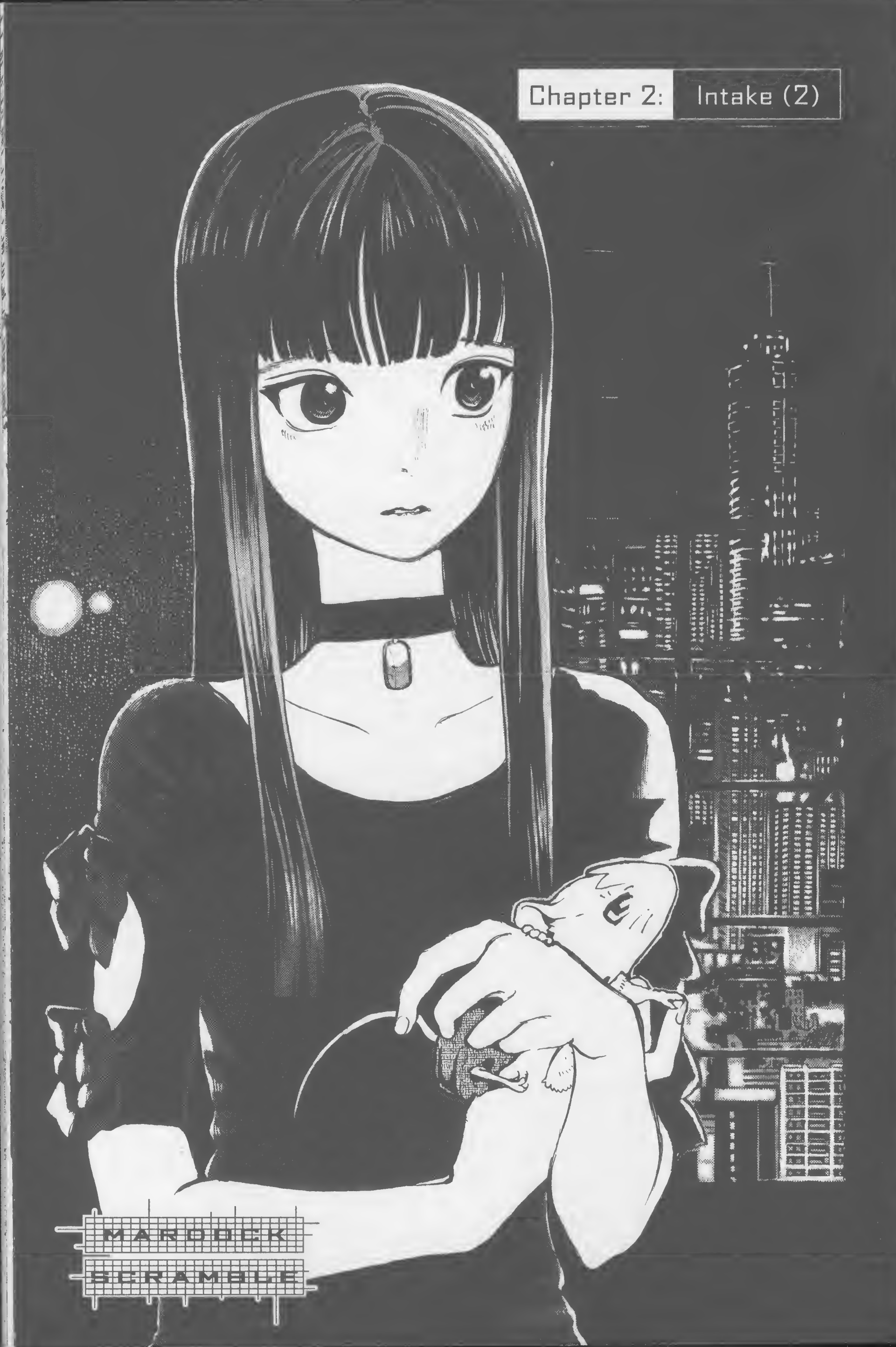

GRAB
!?
She jumped ?!
しゅる
FSSH
!!
FSSH
FSSH

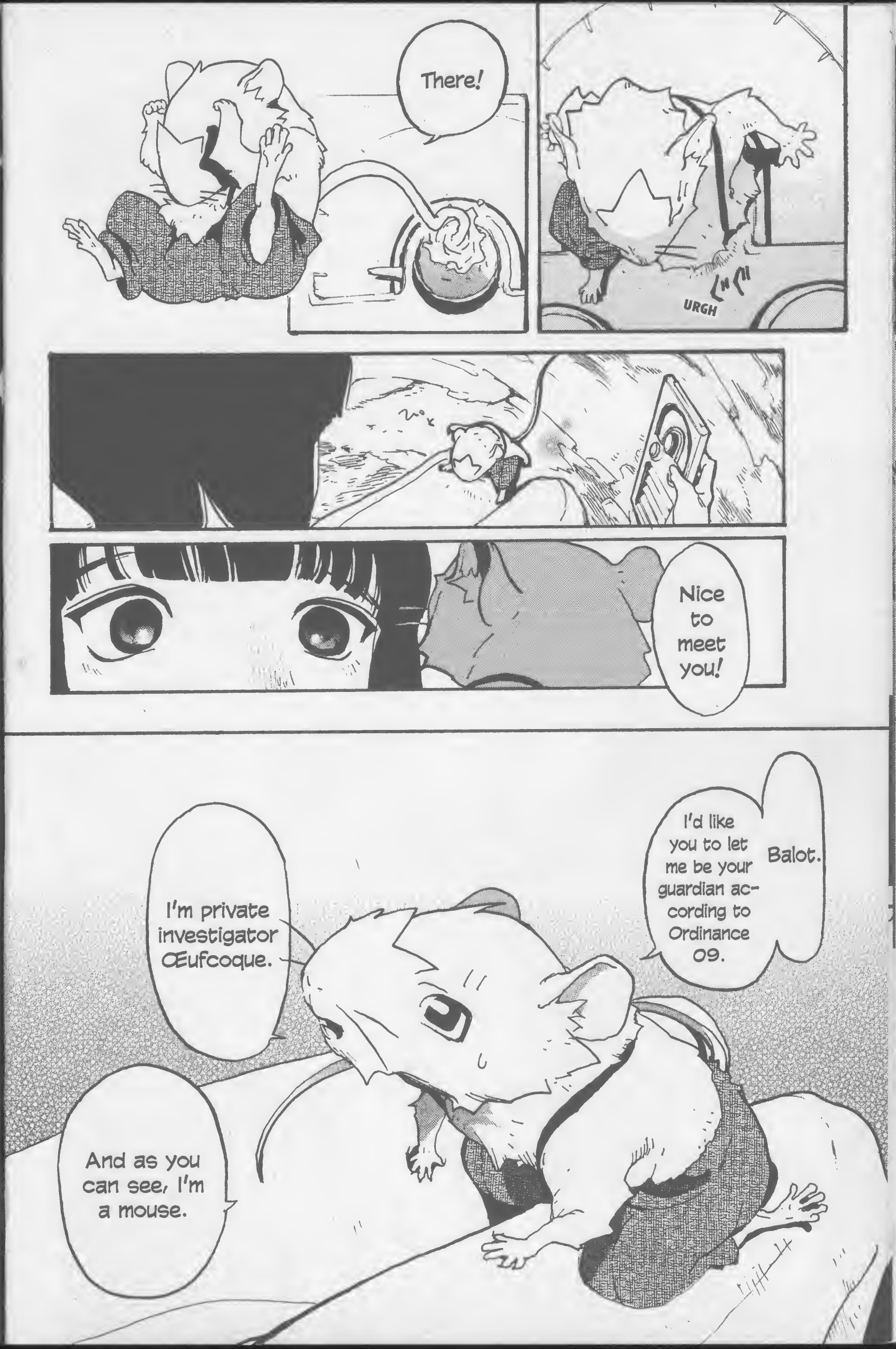

CLICK
Wha ?!
GRAB
TWIRL
GULP

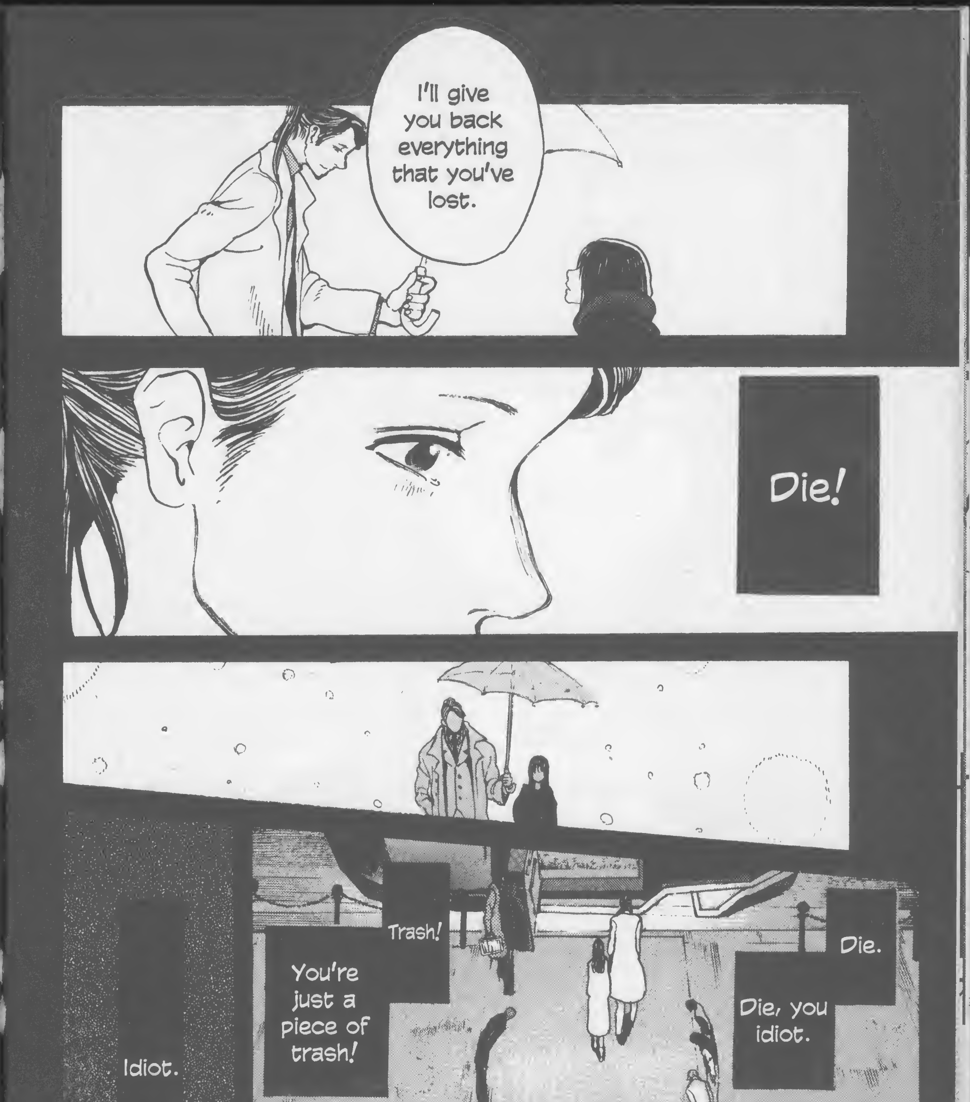

I remember your face...
Rune Balot.
FSSSSHH
PLUNK
What...
FOOOOO
FOOOOO
...is this?!

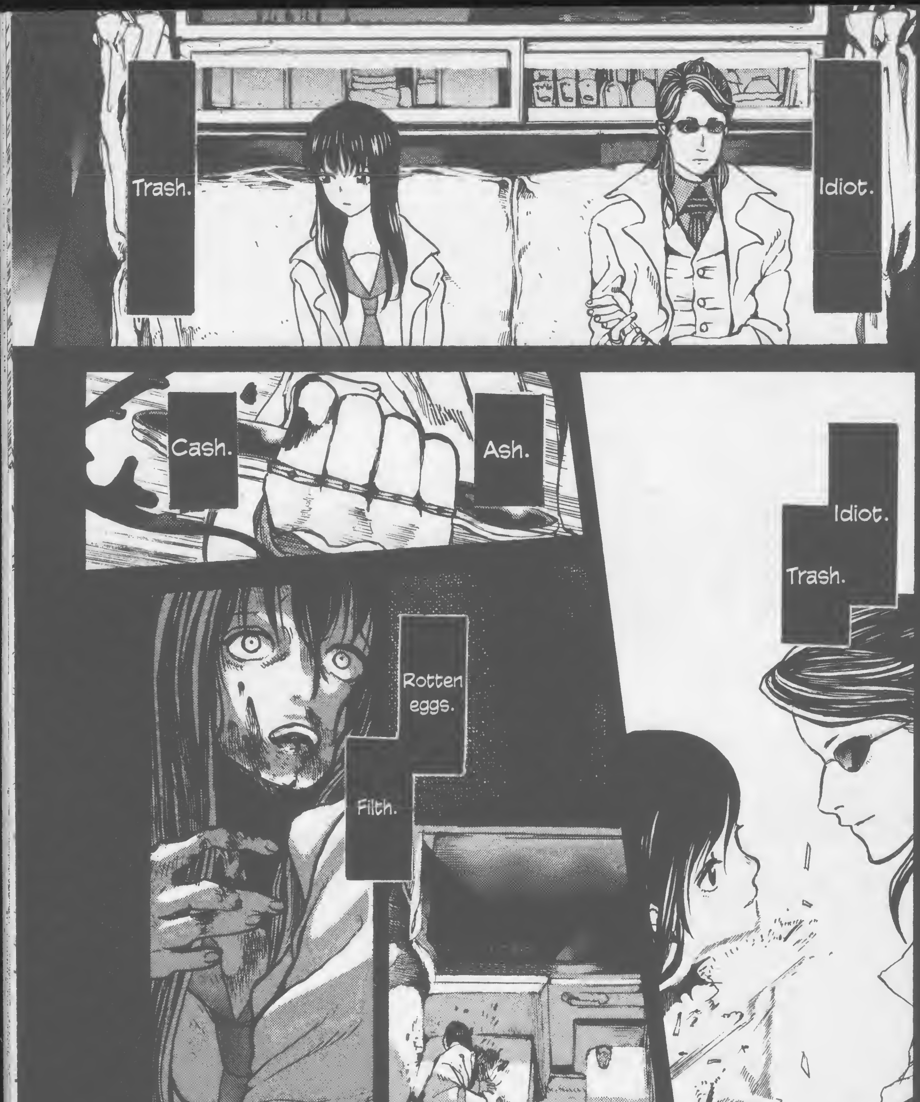

KRRRSH
!
The radio!
Don't worry. I'm on your side.
I know that was a little scary, but what happened today was necessary for you.
Who are you?
I am...
?
Sorry, I can't introduce myself while I'm in the form of the radio.
Don't be scared, okay?
OOF...
!?

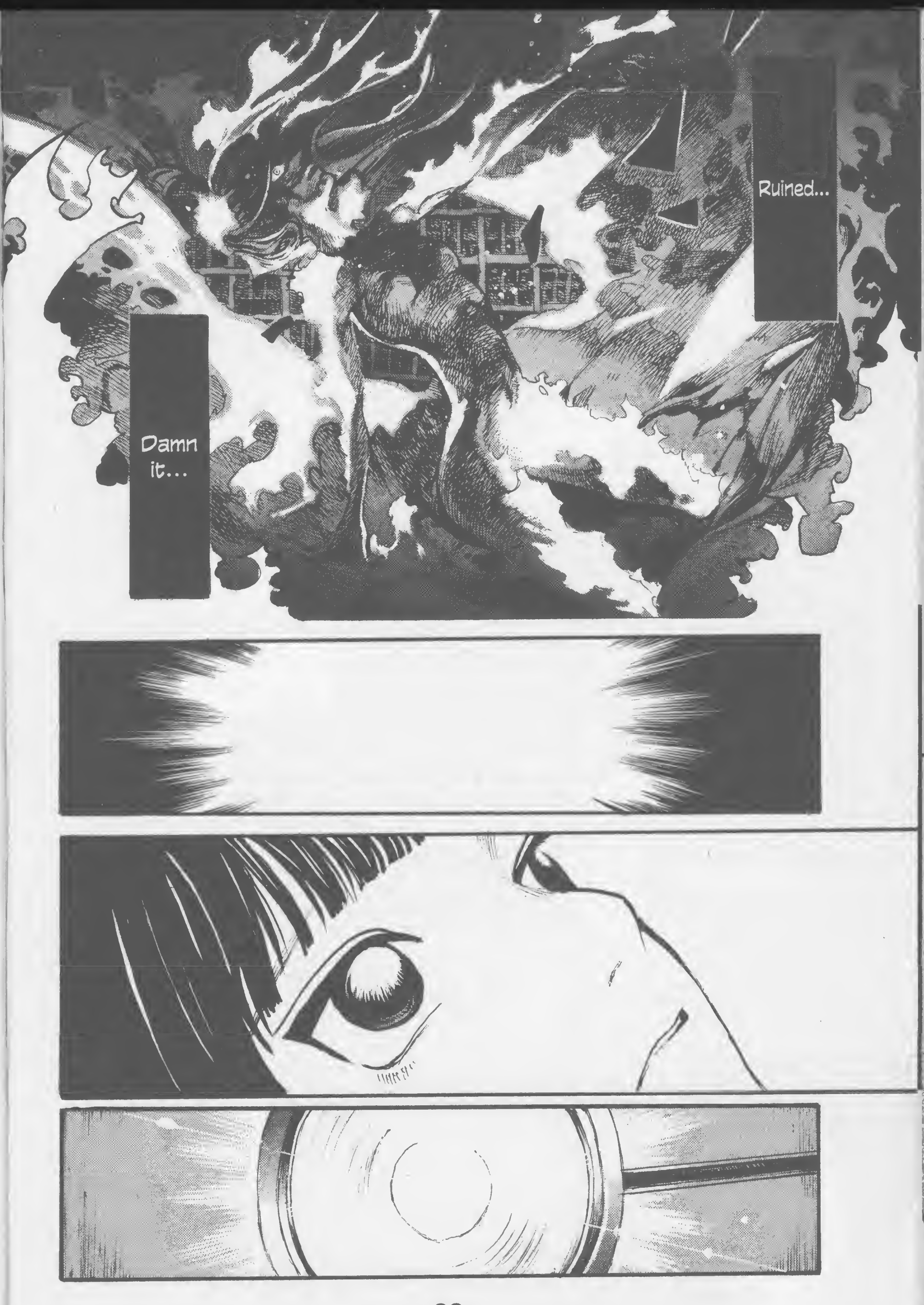
Chapter 2: Intake (2)

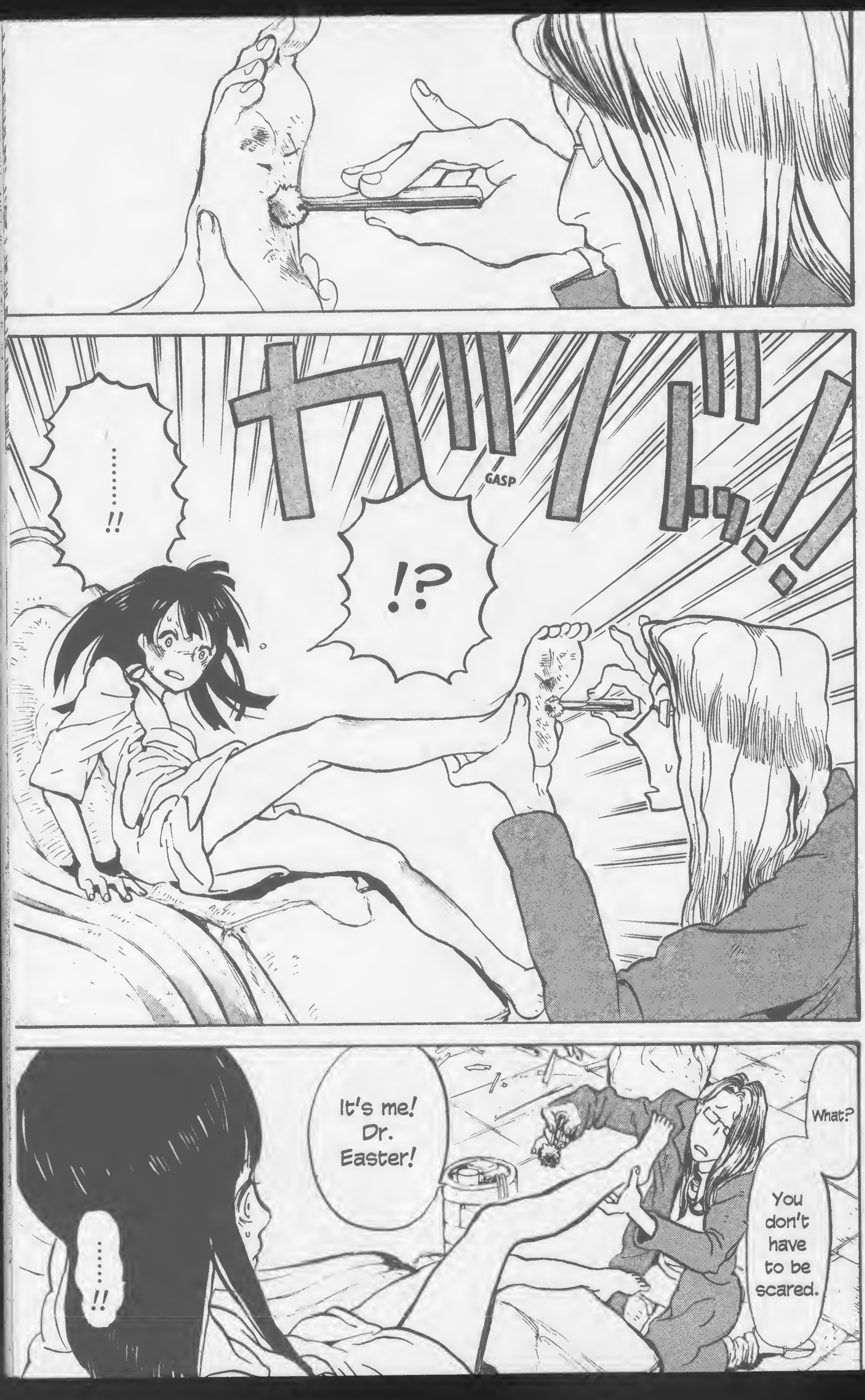

MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

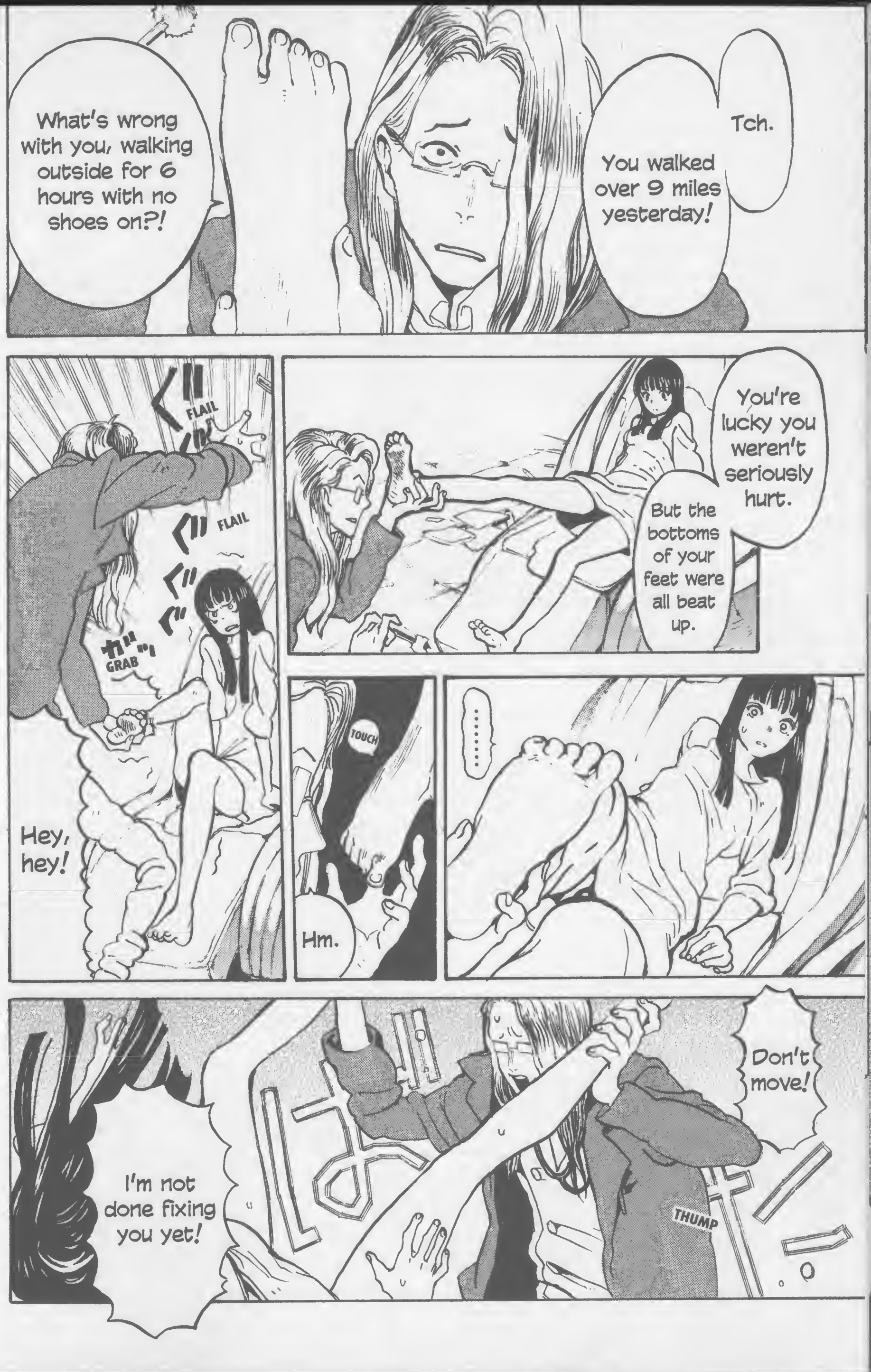

URGH
There!
Nice to meet you!
Balot.
I'd like you to let me be your guardian according to Ordinance 09.
I'm private investigator Œufcoque.
And as you can see, I'm a mouse.

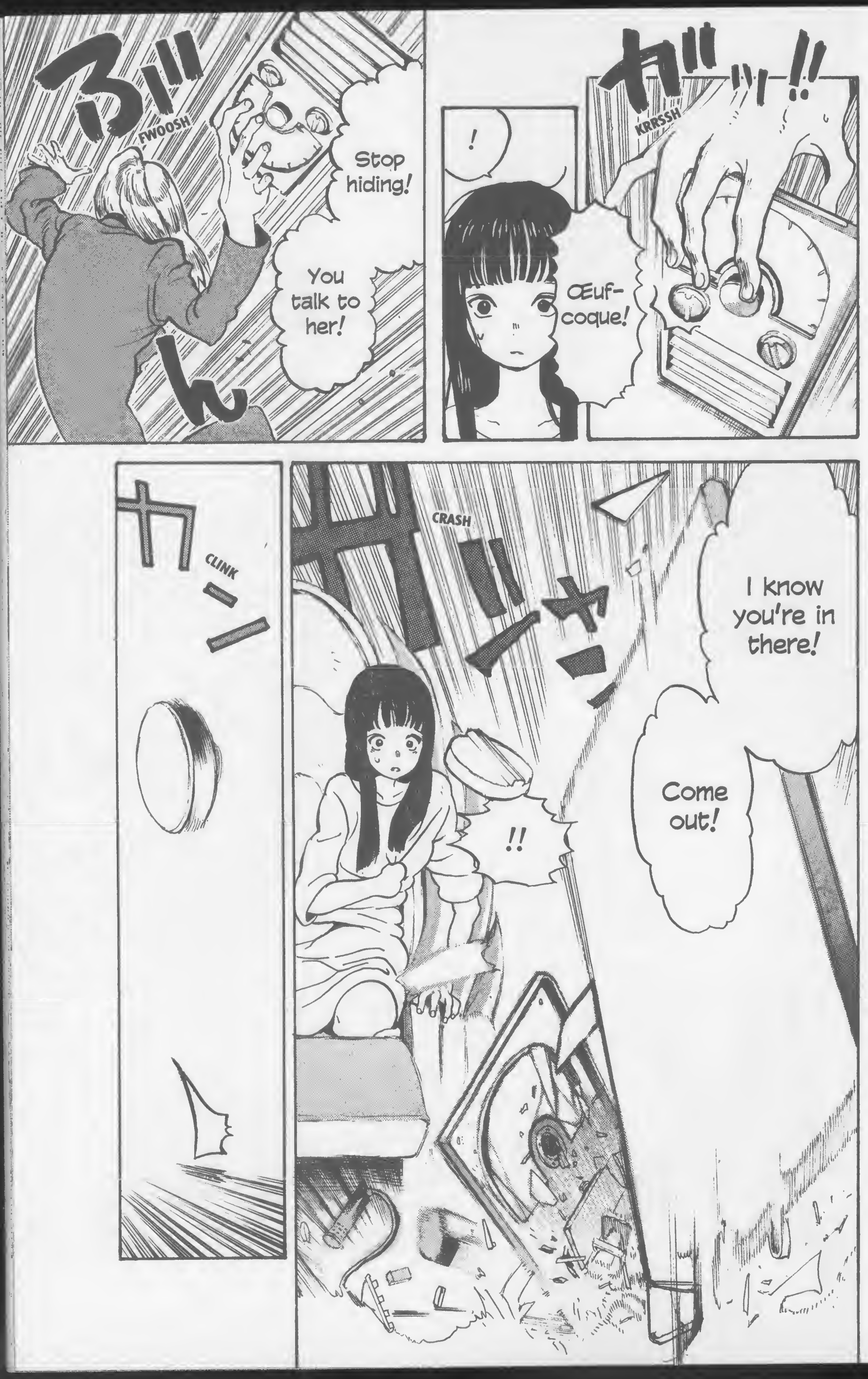

I'll give you back everything that you've lost.
Die!
Die.
Die, you idiot.
Trash!
You're just a piece of trash!
Idiot.
Die, you piece of trash!

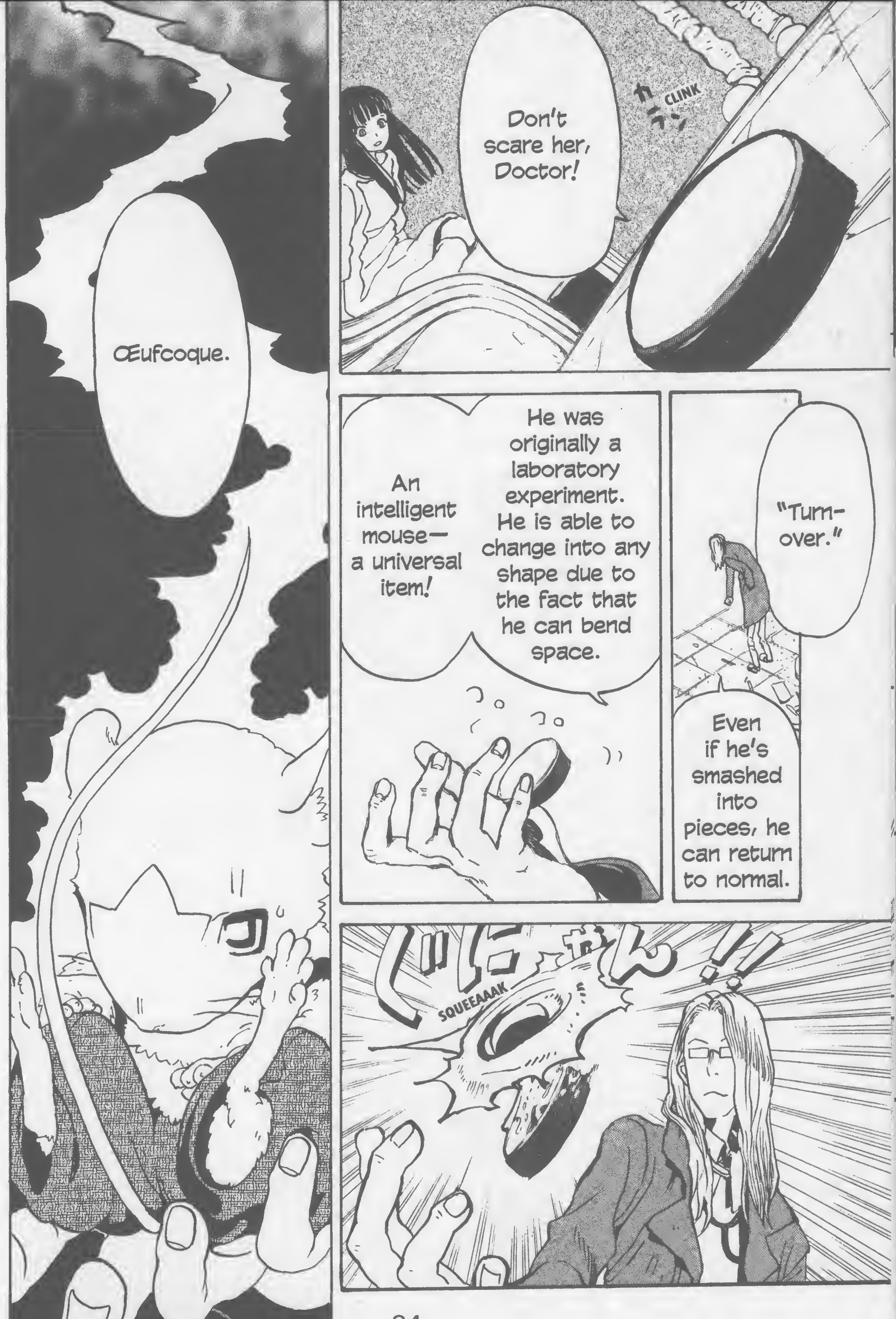

Idiot.
Trash.
Idiot.
Trash.
Ash.
Cash.
Rotten eggs.
Filth.
Bye-bye, Balot.

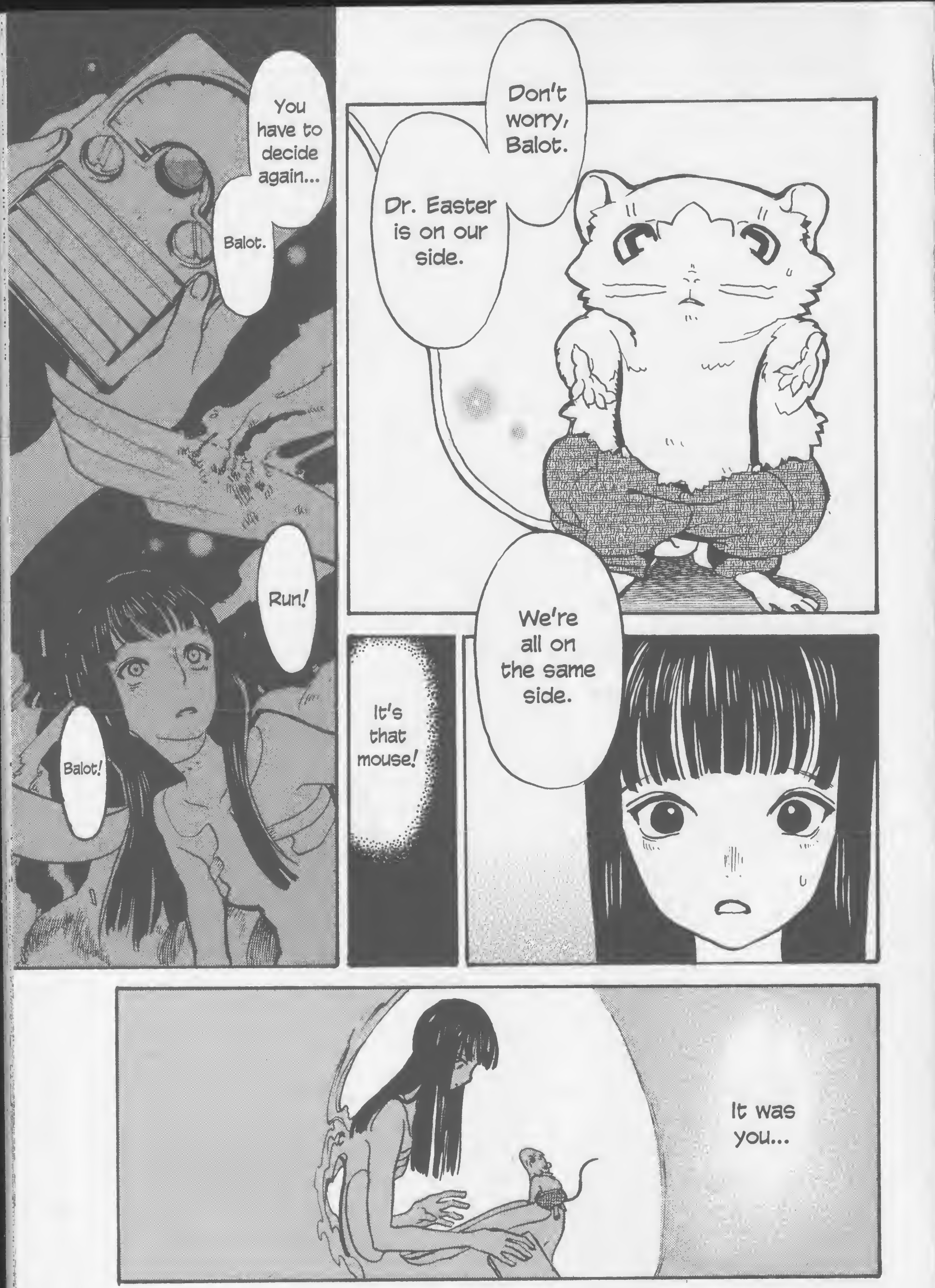

Ruined...
Damn it...

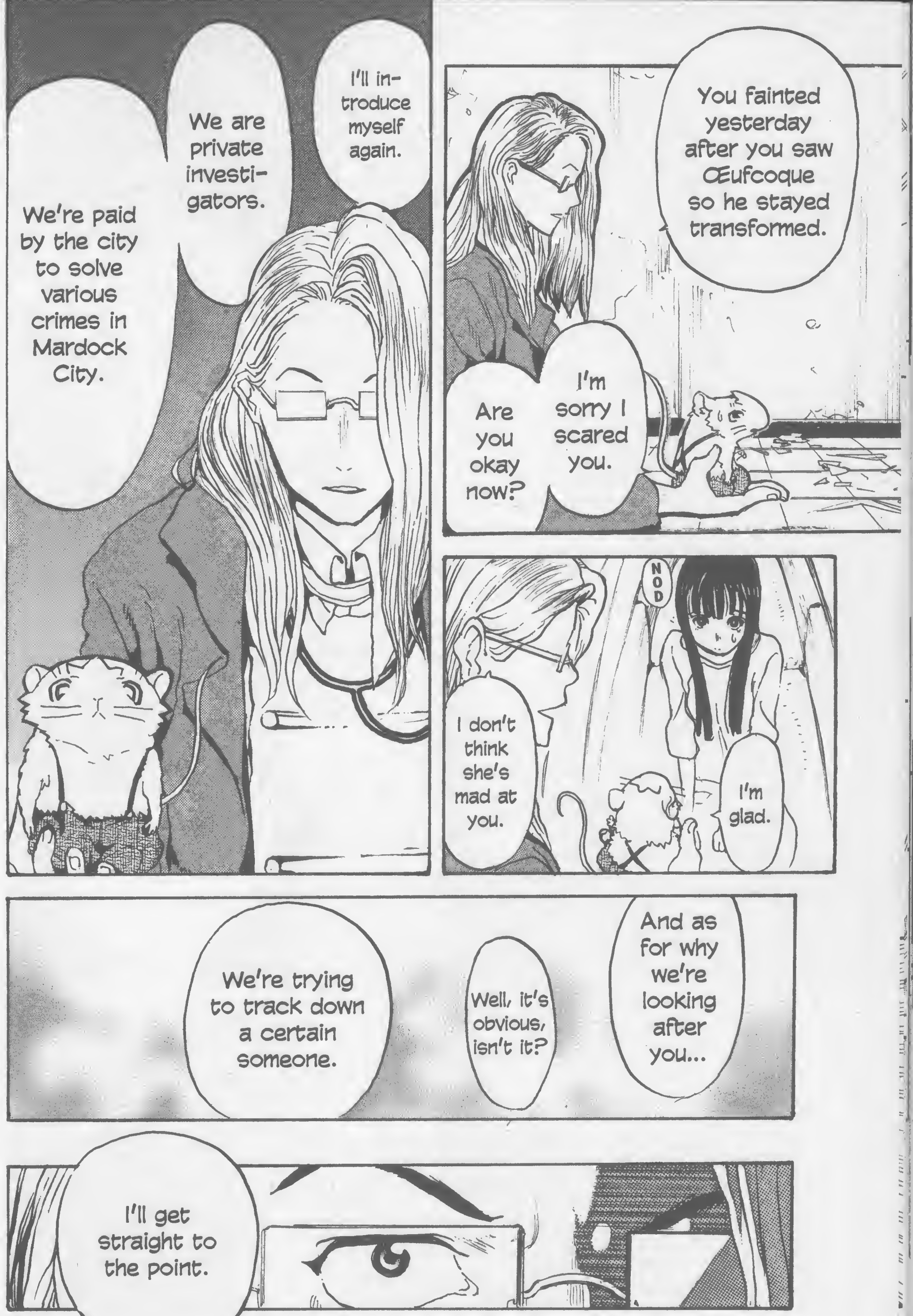

GASP
!?
......!!
What?
You don't have to be scared.
It's me! Dr. Easter!
......!!

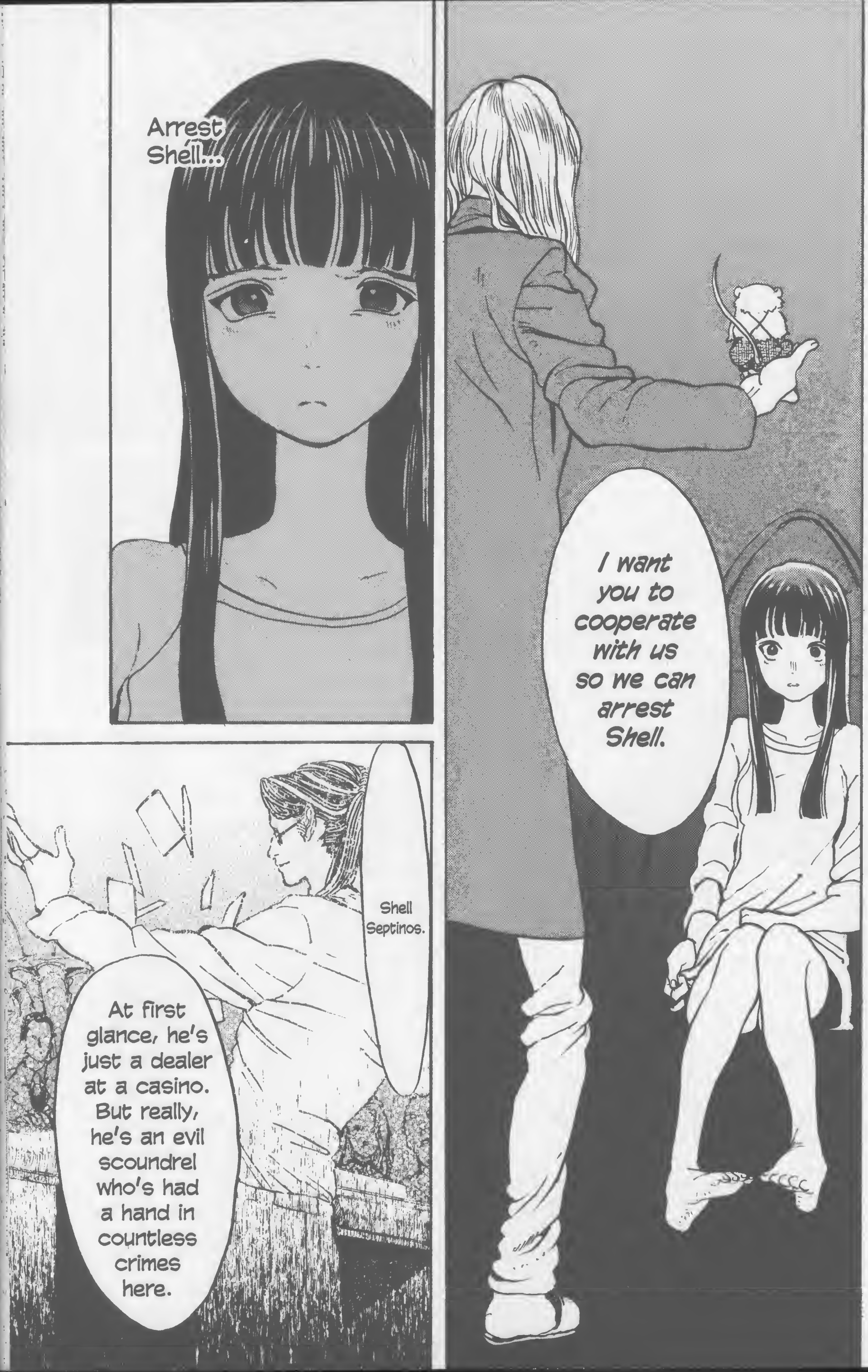

Tch.
You walked over 9 miles yesterday!
What's wrong with you, walking outside for 6 hours with no shoes on?!
You're lucky you weren't seriously hurt.
But the bottoms of your feet were all beat up.
FLAIL
FLAIL
GRAB
Hey, hey!
……
TOUCH
Hm.
Don't move!
I'm not done fixing you yet!
THUMP

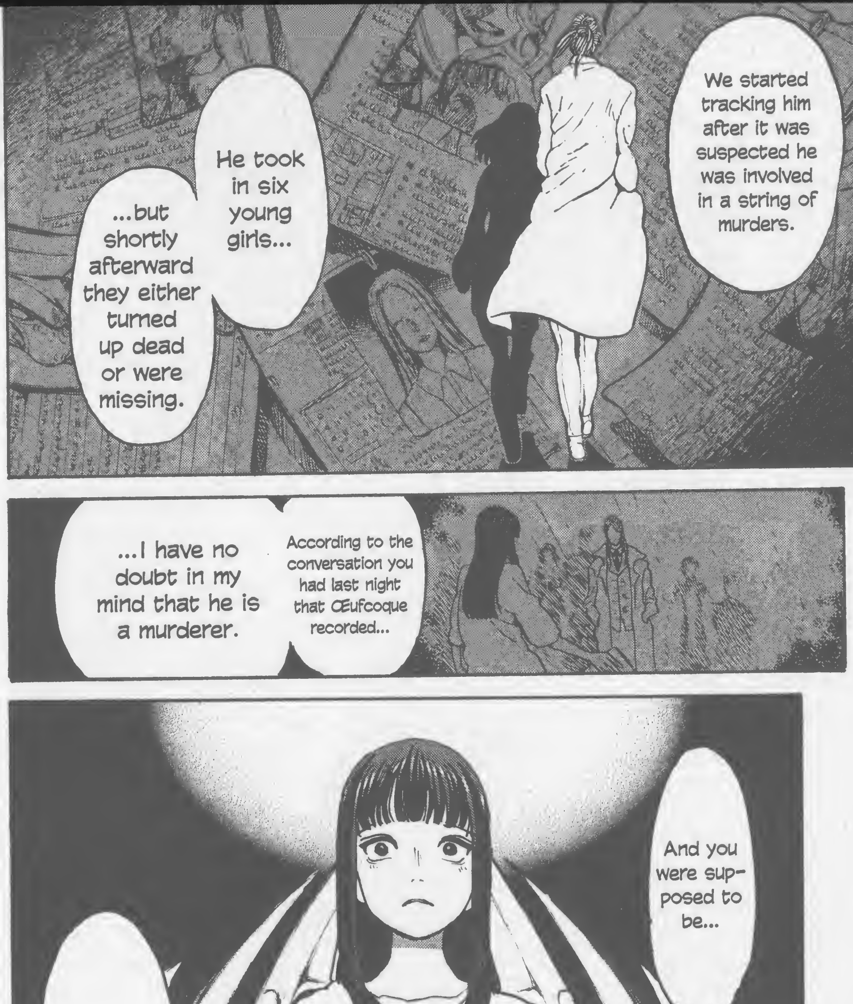

KRRSSH
!
Œuf-coque!
FWOOSH
Stop hiding!
You talk to her!
CRASH
I know you're in there!
Come out!
!!
CLINK

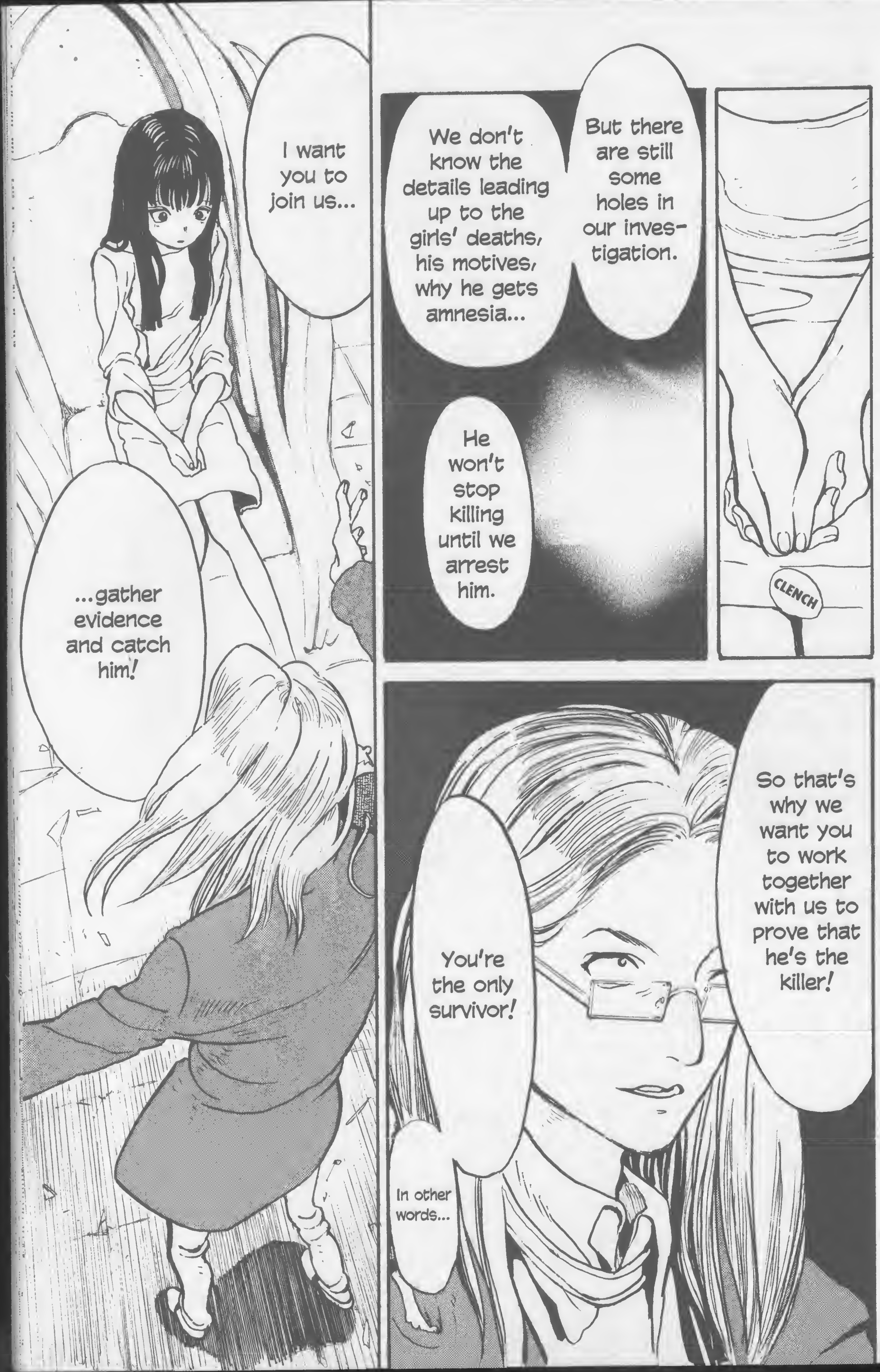

Don't scare her, Doctor!
カラン CLINK
"Turn-over."
Even if he's smashed into pieces, he can return to normal.
He was originally a laboratory experiment. He is able to change into any shape due to the fact that he can bend space.
An intelligent mouse—a universal item!
ぐにゃん!! SQUEEAAAK
Œufcoque.

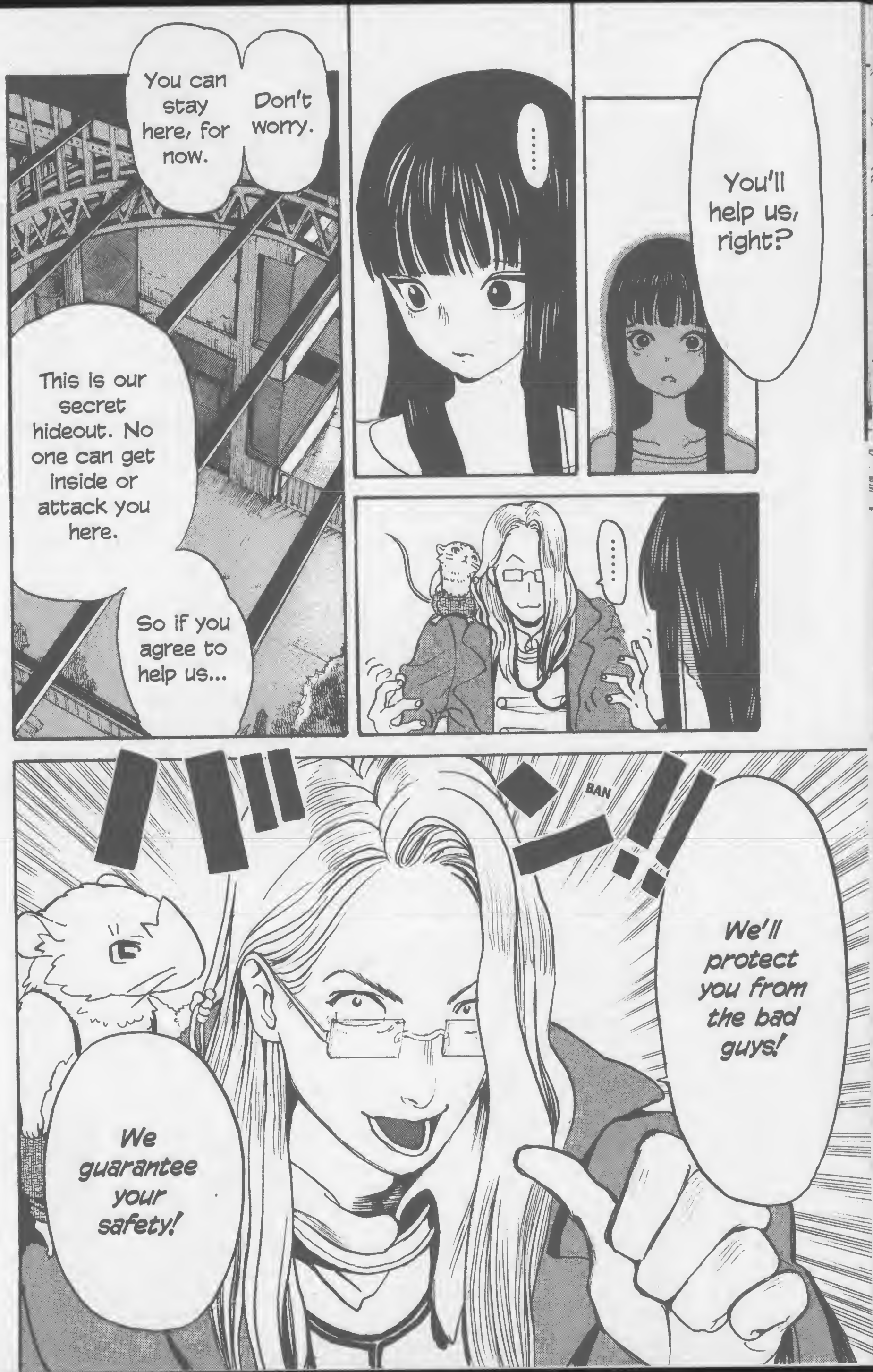

Don't worry, Balot.
Dr. Easter is on our side.
We're all on the same side.
It's that mouse!
You have to decide again...
Balot.
Run!
Balot!
It was you...

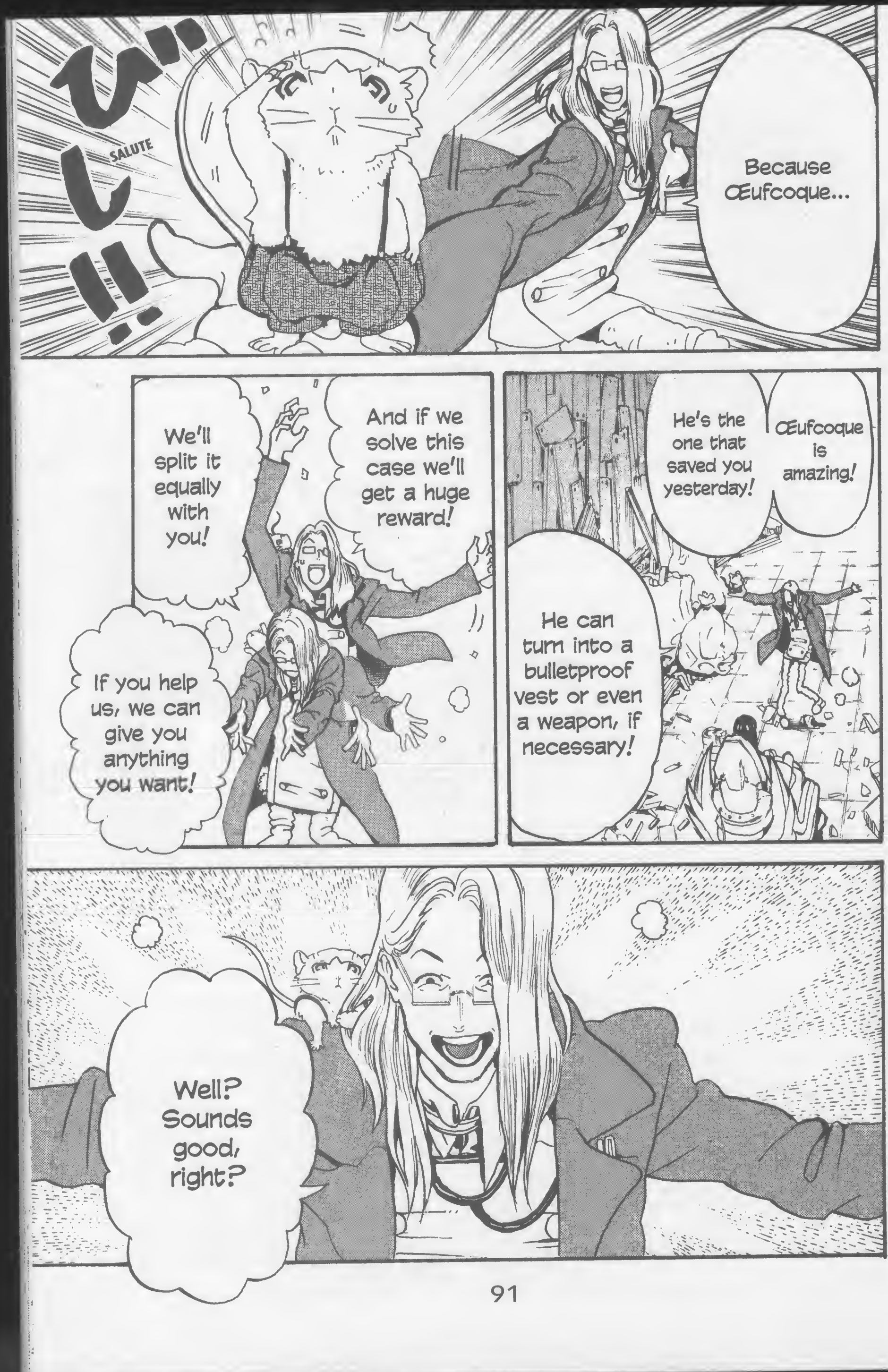

You fainted yesterday after you saw Œufcoque so he stayed transformed.
I'm sorry I scared you.
Are you okay now?
NOD
I'm glad.
I don't think she's mad at you.
I'll introduce myself again.
We are private investigators.
We're paid by the city to solve various crimes in Mardock City.
And as for why we're looking after you...
Well, it's obvious, isn't it?
We're trying to track down a certain someone.
I'll get straight to the point.

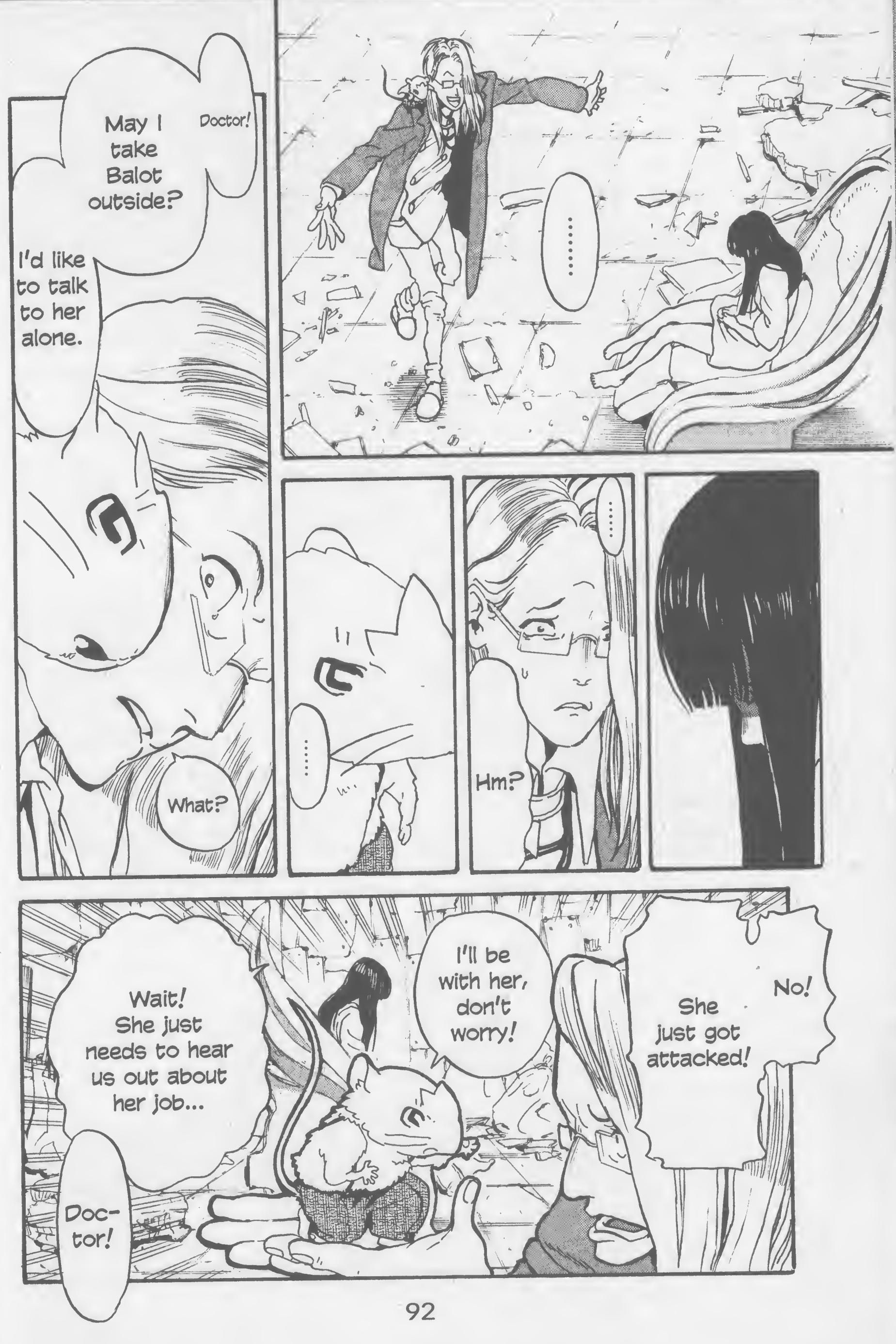

I want you to cooperate with us so we can arrest Shell.
Arrest Shell...
Shell Septinos.
At first glance, he's just a dealer at a casino. But really, he's an evil scoundrel who's had a hand in countless crimes here.

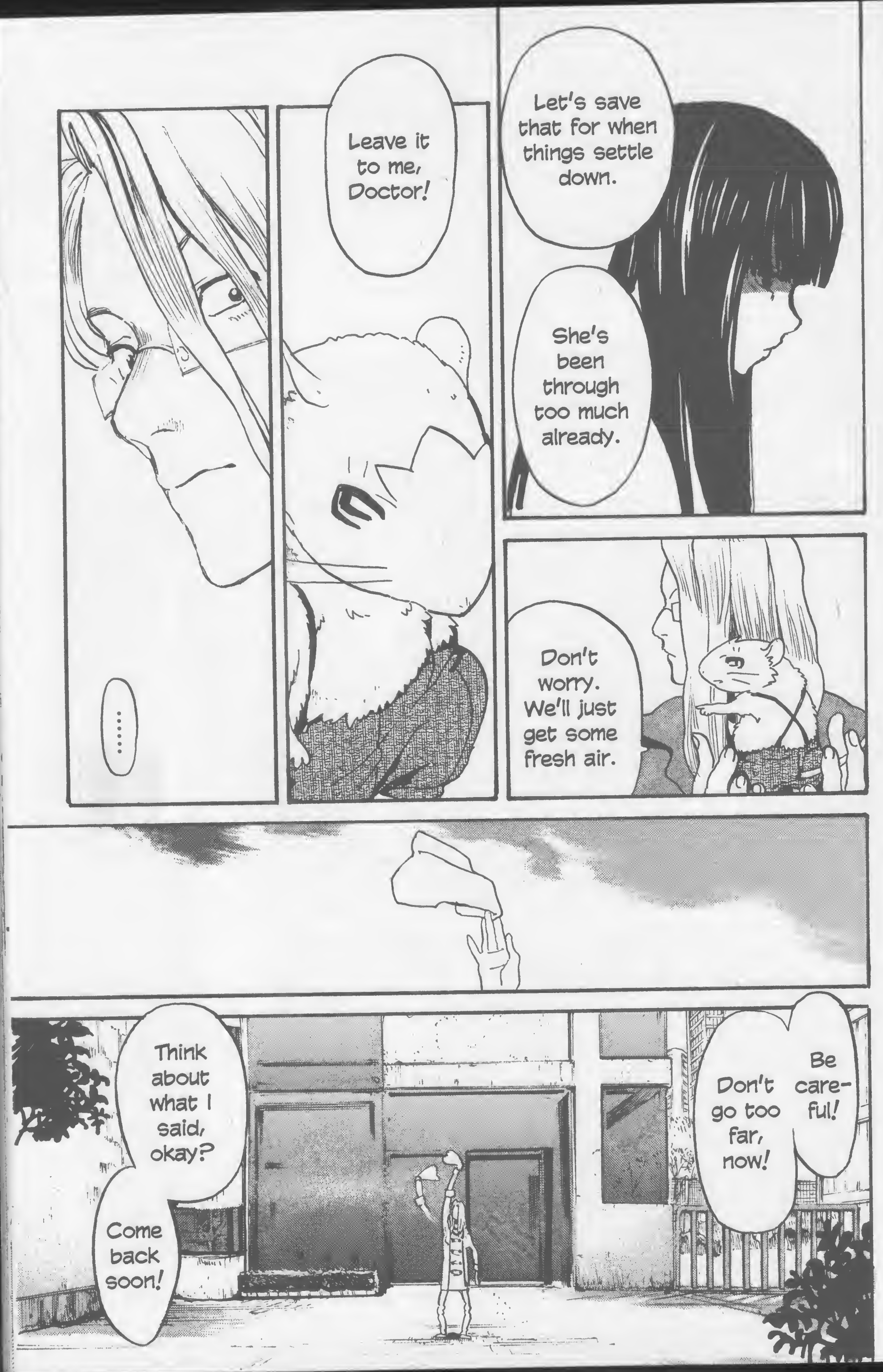

We started tracking him after it was suspected he was involved in a string of murders.
He took in six young girls...
...but shortly afterward they either turned up dead or were missing.
According to the conversation you had last night that Œufcoque recorded...
...I have no doubt in my mind that he is a murderer.
And you were supposed to be...
...the seventh one.

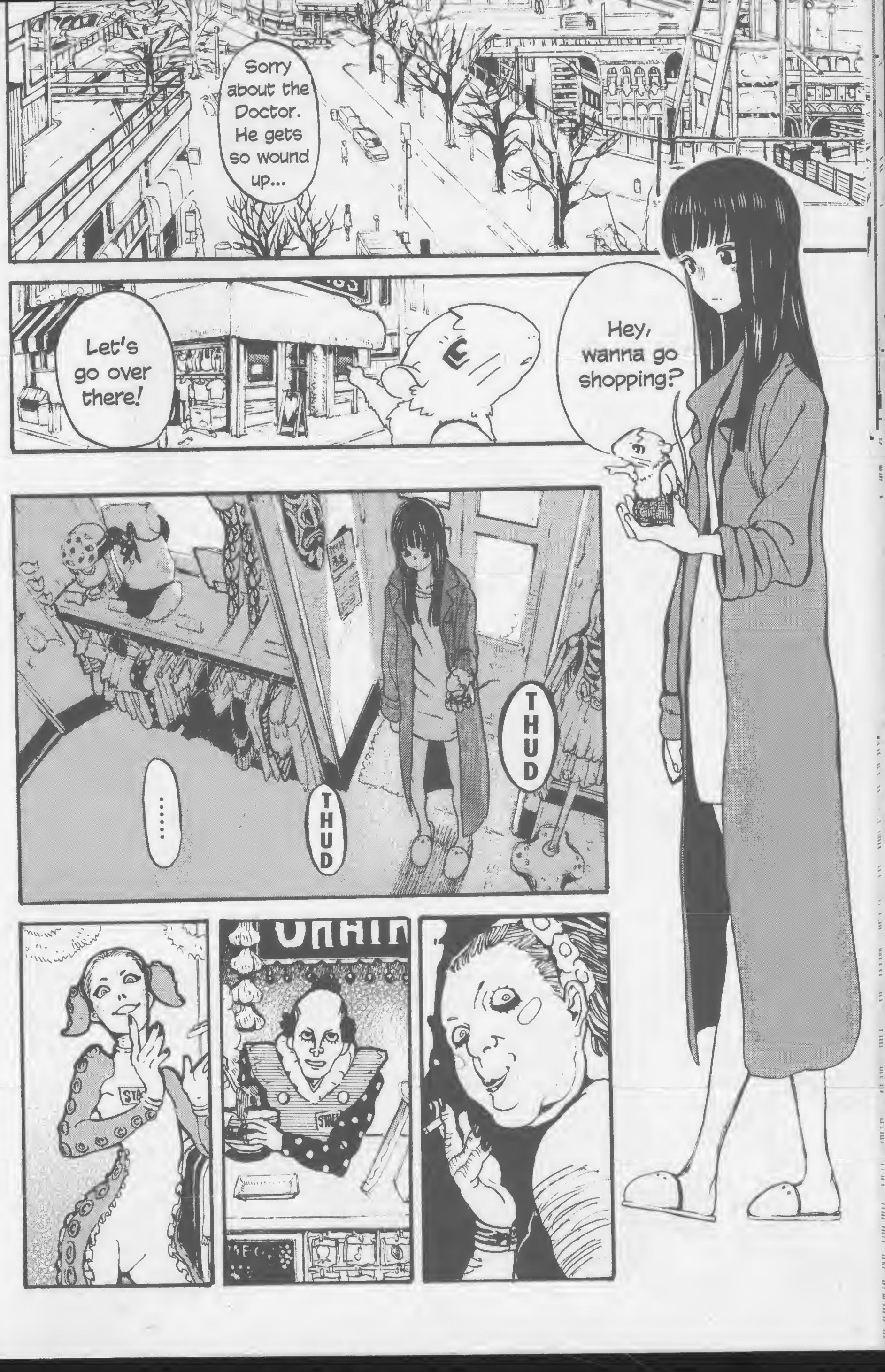

But there are still some holes in our investigation.
We don't know the details leading up to the girls' deaths, his motives, why he gets amnesia...
He won't stop killing until we arrest him.
CLENCH
So that's why we want you to work together with us to prove that he's the killer!
You're the only survivor!
In other words...
I want you to join us...
...gather evidence and catch him!

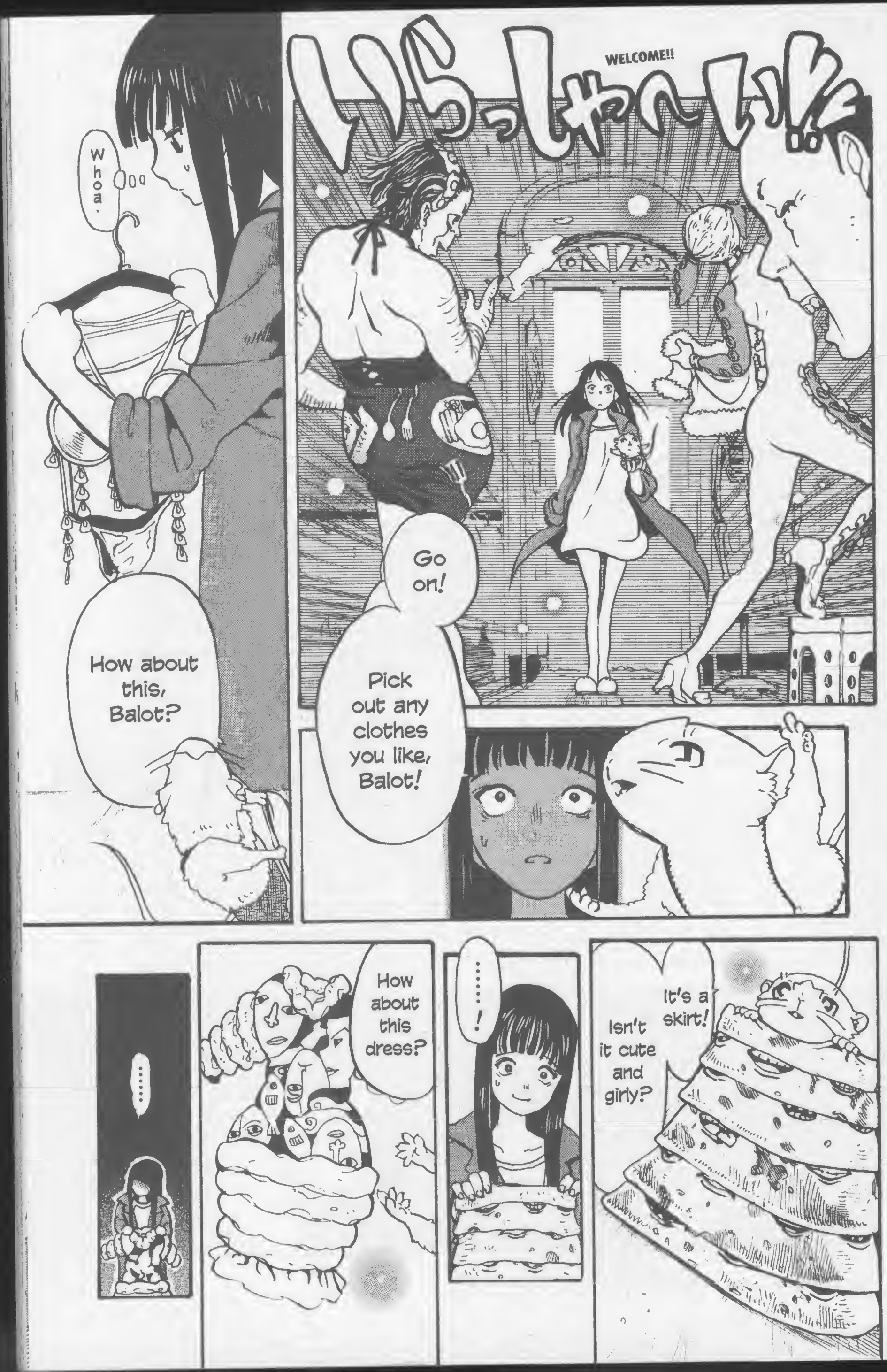

You'll help us, right?
......
Don't worry.
You can stay here, for now.
This is our secret hideout. No one can get inside or attack you here.
So if you agree to help us...
......
バーン!!
BAN
We'll protect you from the bad guys!
We guarantee your safety!

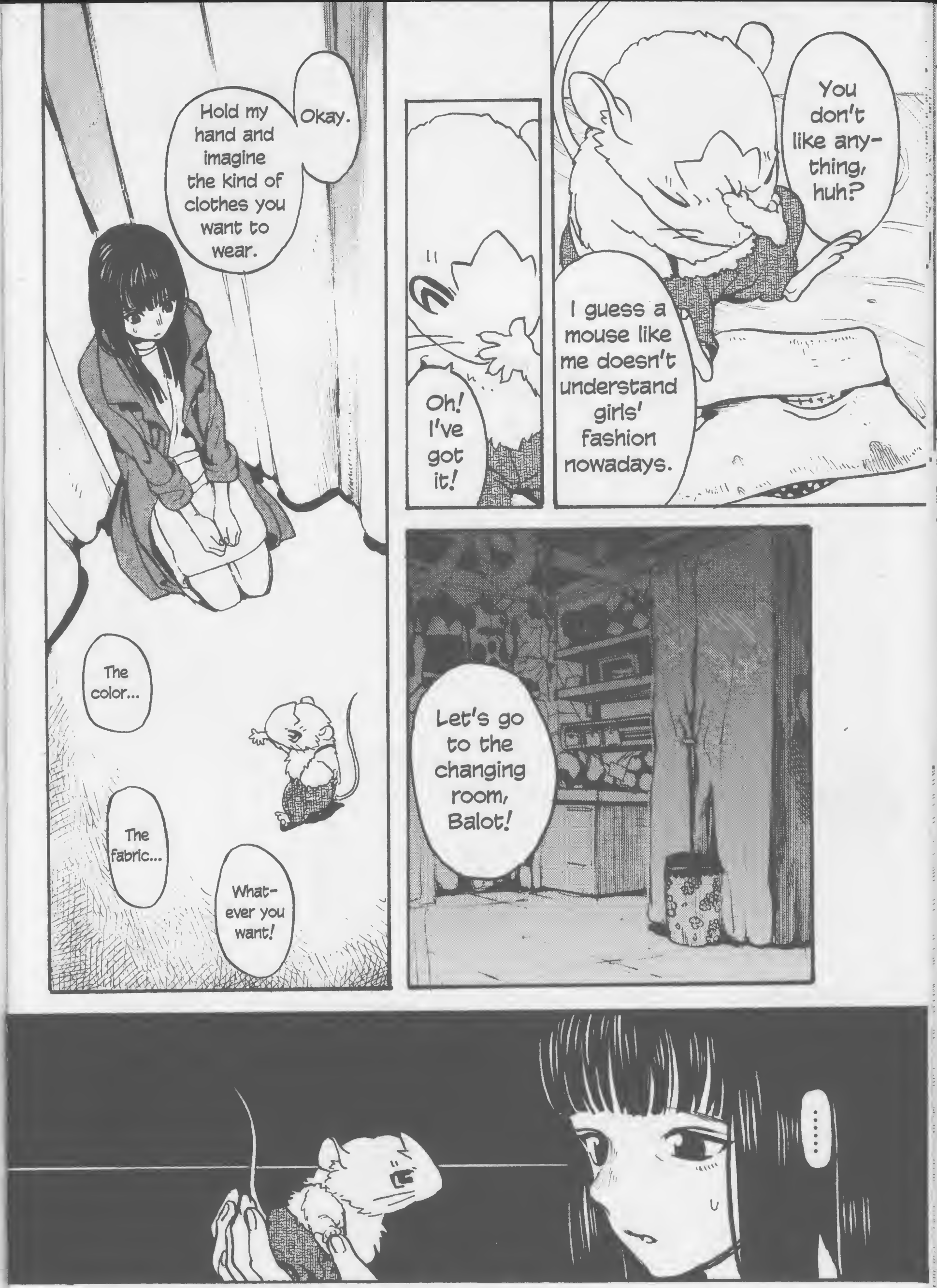

Because Œufcoque...
びしっ!!
SALUTE
Œufcoque is amazing!
He's the one that saved you yesterday!
He can turn into a bulletproof vest or even a weapon, if necessary!
And if we solve this case we'll get a huge reward!
We'll split it equally with you!
If you help us, we can give you anything you want!
Well? Sounds good, right?

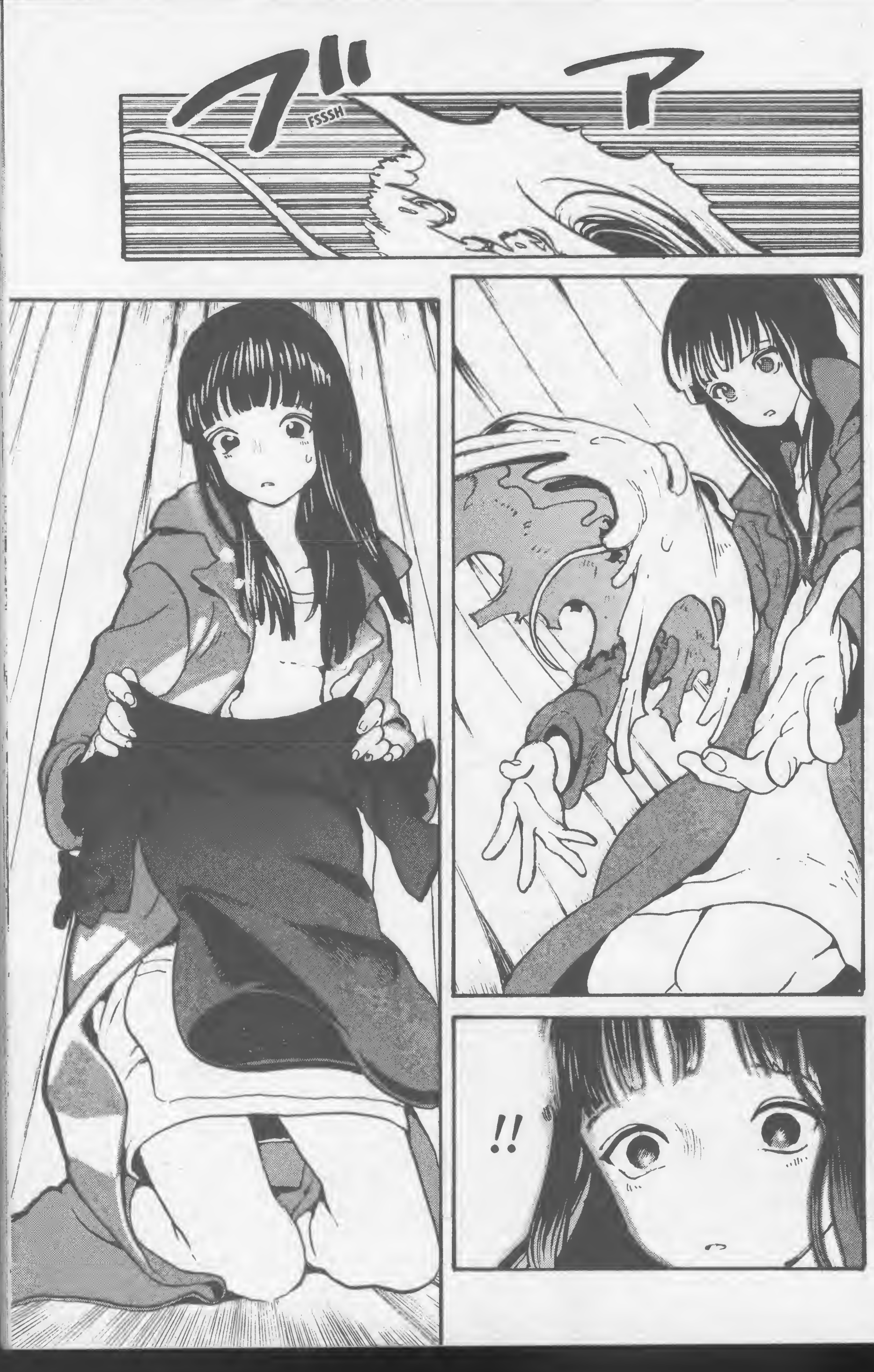

Doctor!
……
May I take Balot outside?
I'd like to talk to her alone.
What?
……
……
Hm?
No!
She just got attacked!
I'll be with her, don't worry!
Wait! She just needs to hear us out about her job...
Doctor!

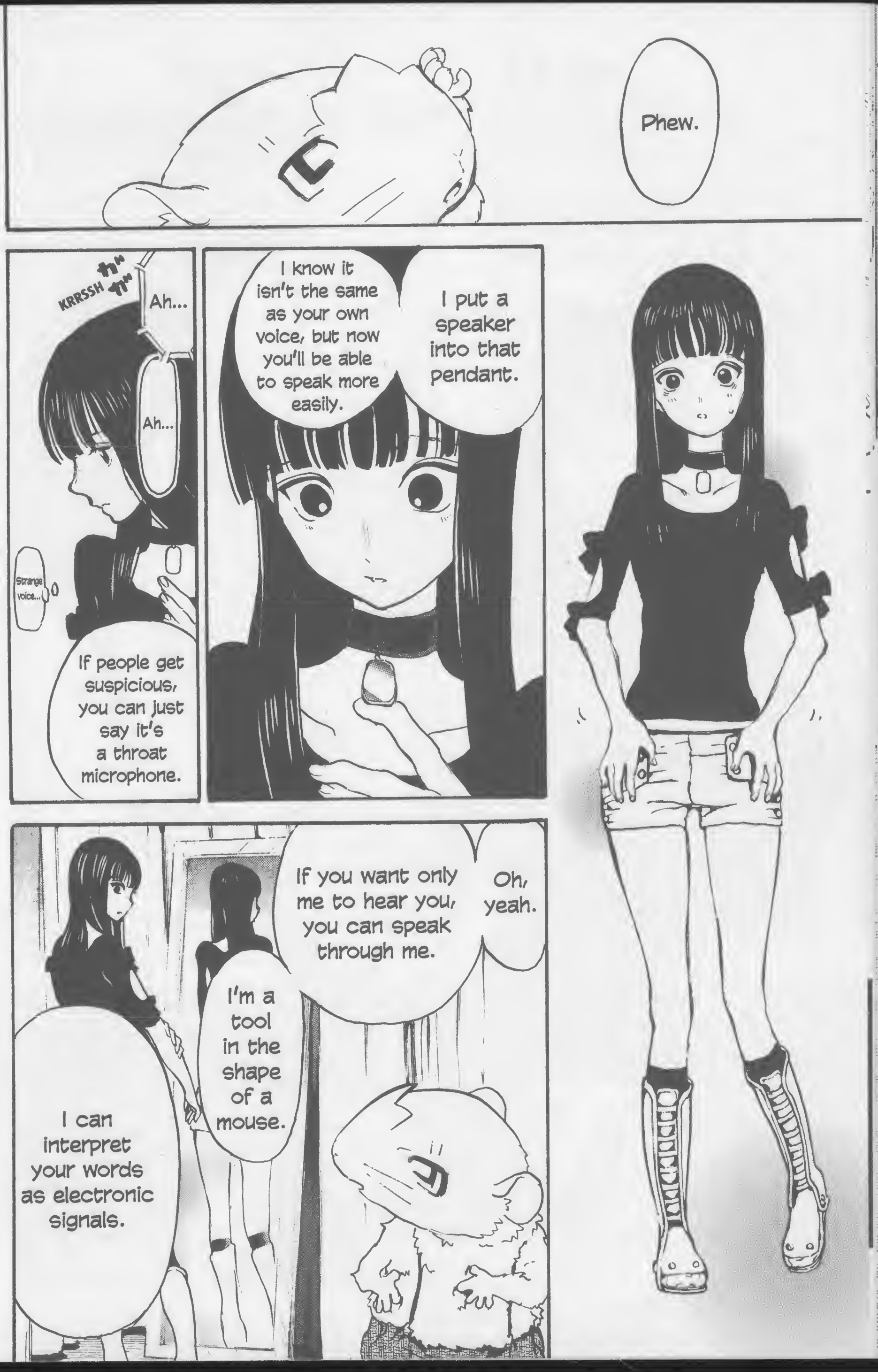

Let's save that for when things settle down.
She's been through too much already.
Don't worry. We'll just get some fresh air.
Leave it to me, Doctor!
……
Be careful!
Don't go too far, now!
Think about what I said, okay?
Come back soon!

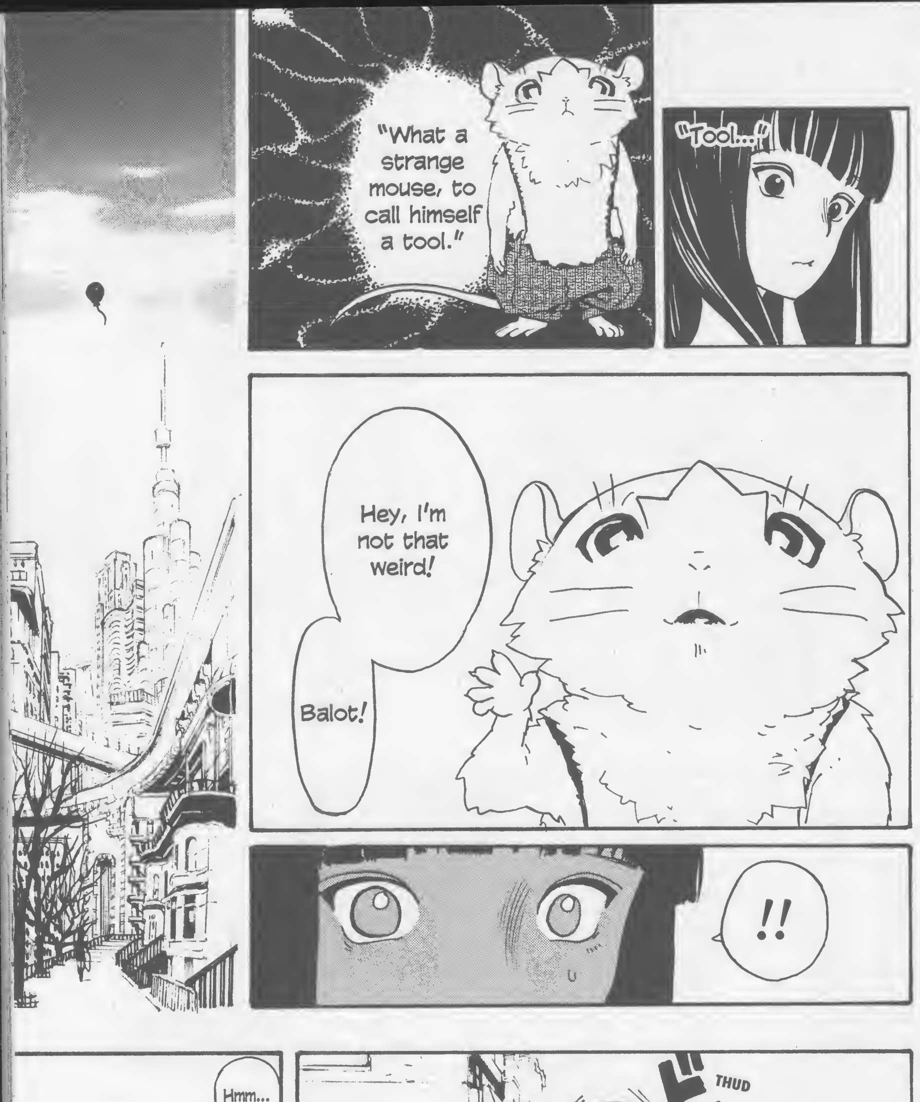

Sorry about the Doctor. He gets so wound up...
Hey, wanna go shopping?
Let's go over there!
THUD
THUD
......
UHHIT
STA
STRE

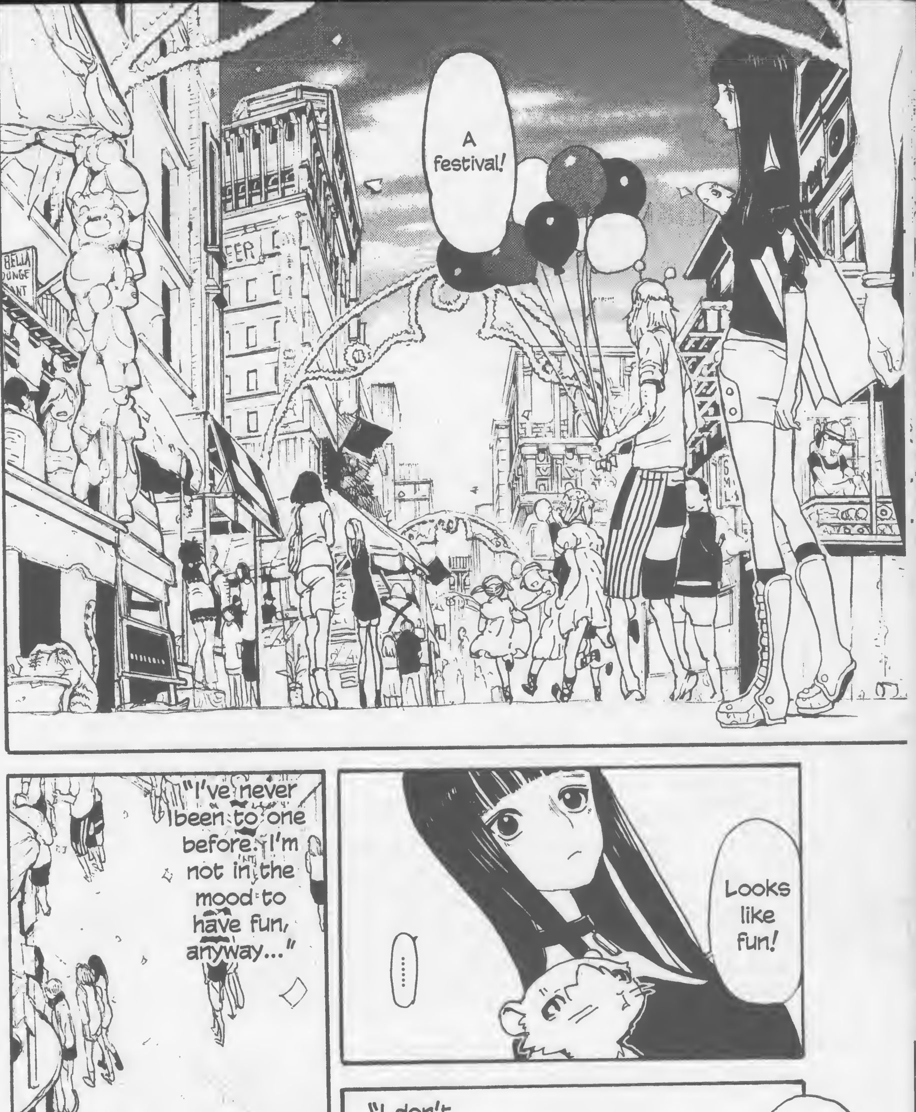

いらっしゃ〜い!!
WELCOME!!
Go on!
Pick out any clothes you like, Balot!
Whoa.
How about this, Balot?
It's a skirt!
Isn't it cute and girly?
......!
How about this dress?
......

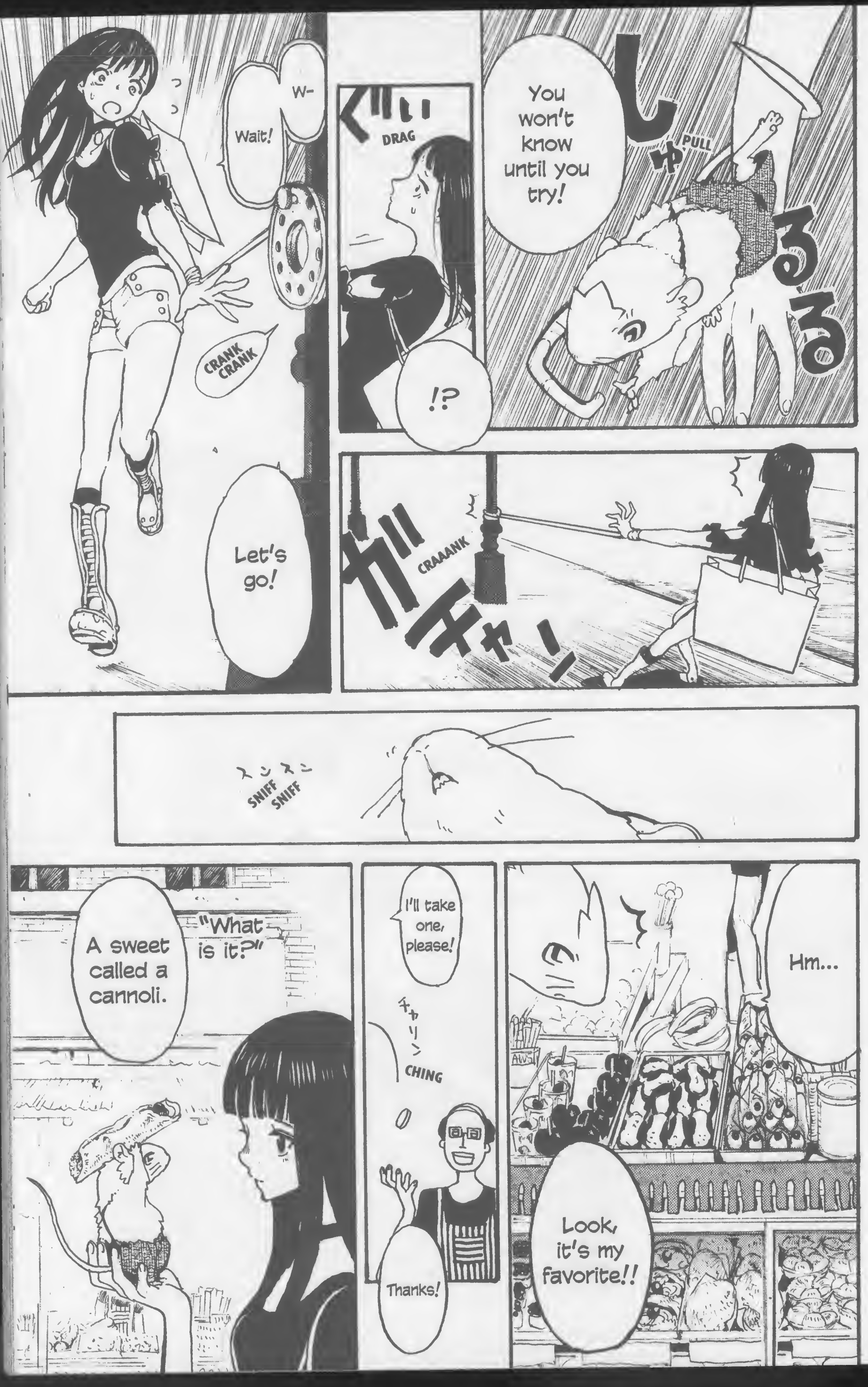

You don't like any-thing, huh?
I guess a mouse like me doesn't understand girls' fashion nowadays.
Oh! I've got it!
Let's go to the changing room, Balot!
Hold my hand and imagine the kind of clothes you want to wear.
Okay.
The color...
The fabric...
Whatever you want!
……

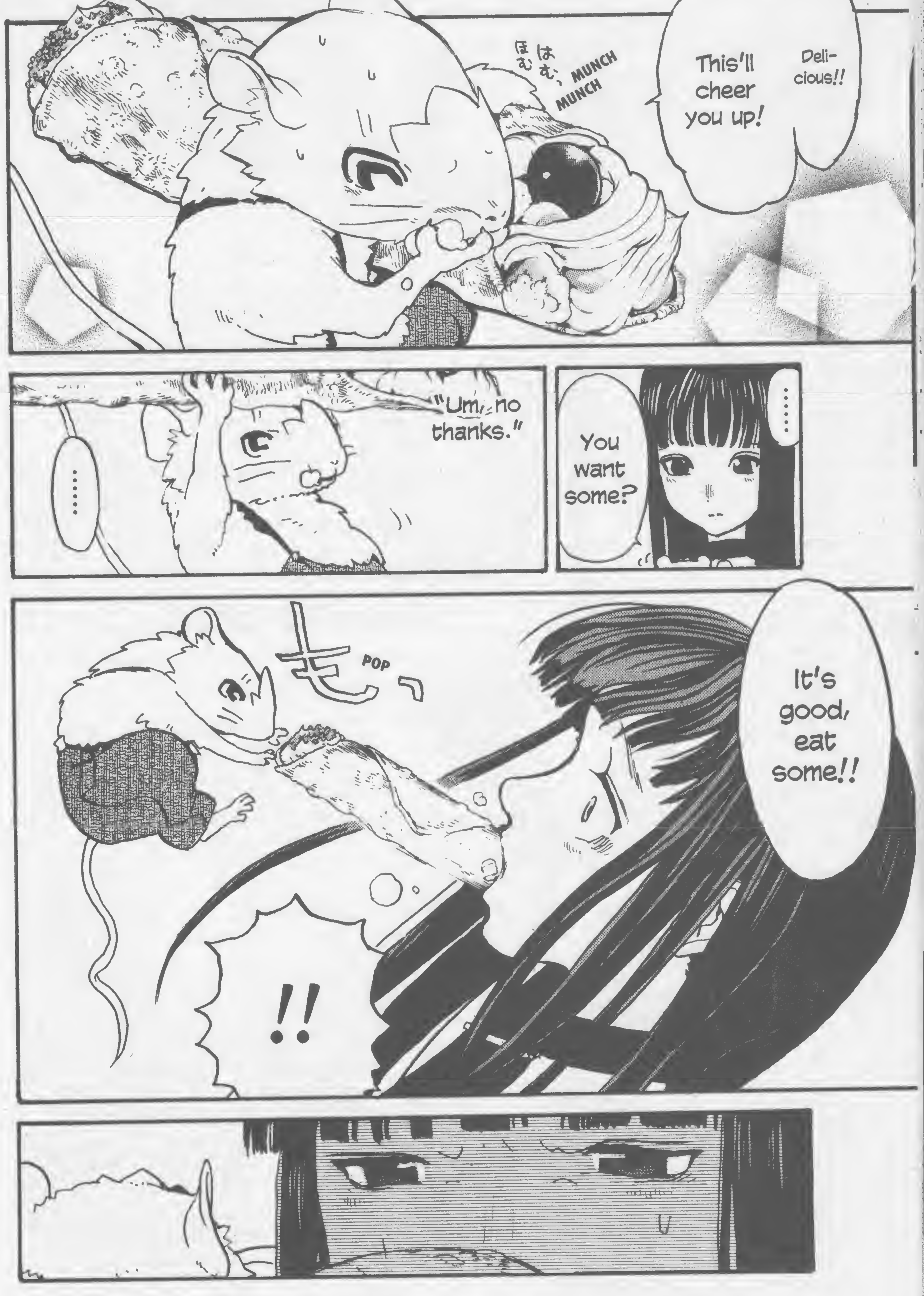

ブ
ア
FSSSH
!!

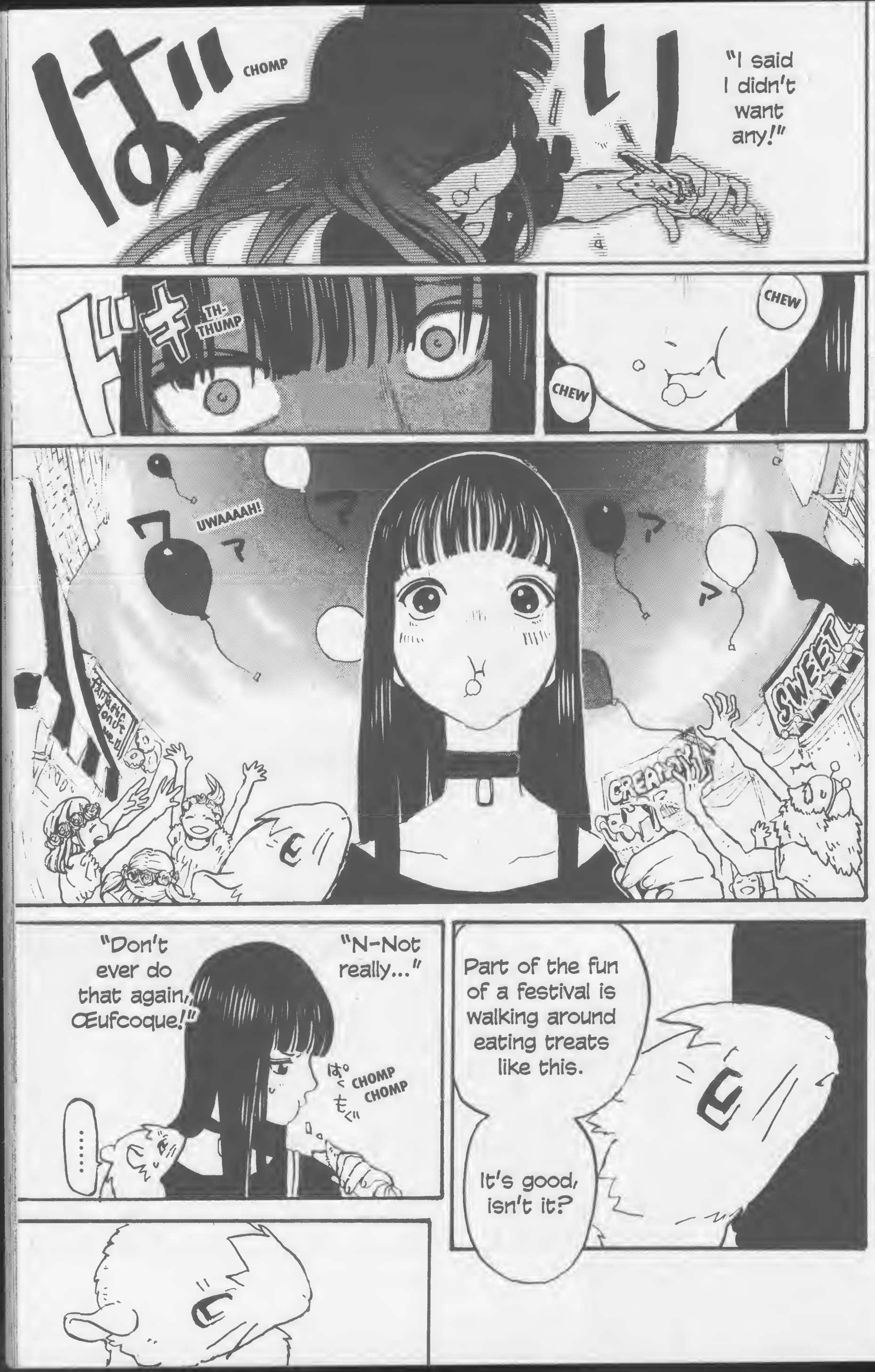

Phew.
I put a speaker into that pendant.
I know it isn't the same as your own voice, but now you'll be able to speak more easily.
KRRSSH
Ah...
Ah...
Strange voice...
If people get suspicious, you can just say it's a throat microphone.
Oh, yeah.
If you want only me to hear you, you can speak through me.
I'm a tool in the shape of a mouse.
I can interpret your words as electronic signals.

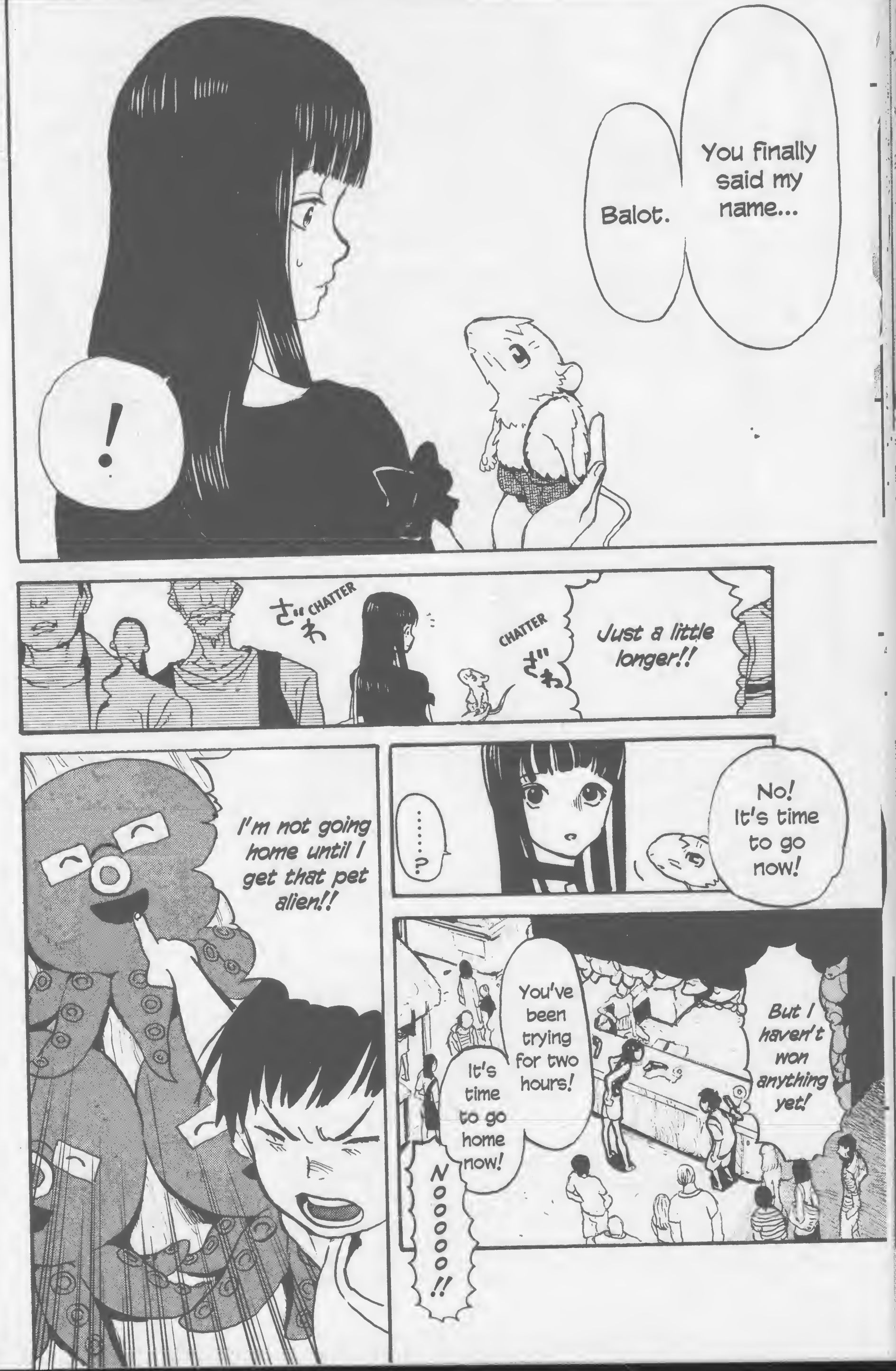

"Tool..."
"What a strange mouse, to call himself a tool."
Hey, I'm not that weird!
Balot!
!!
KYAA!
THUD
!!
KYAA!
!
Hmm...
It's...

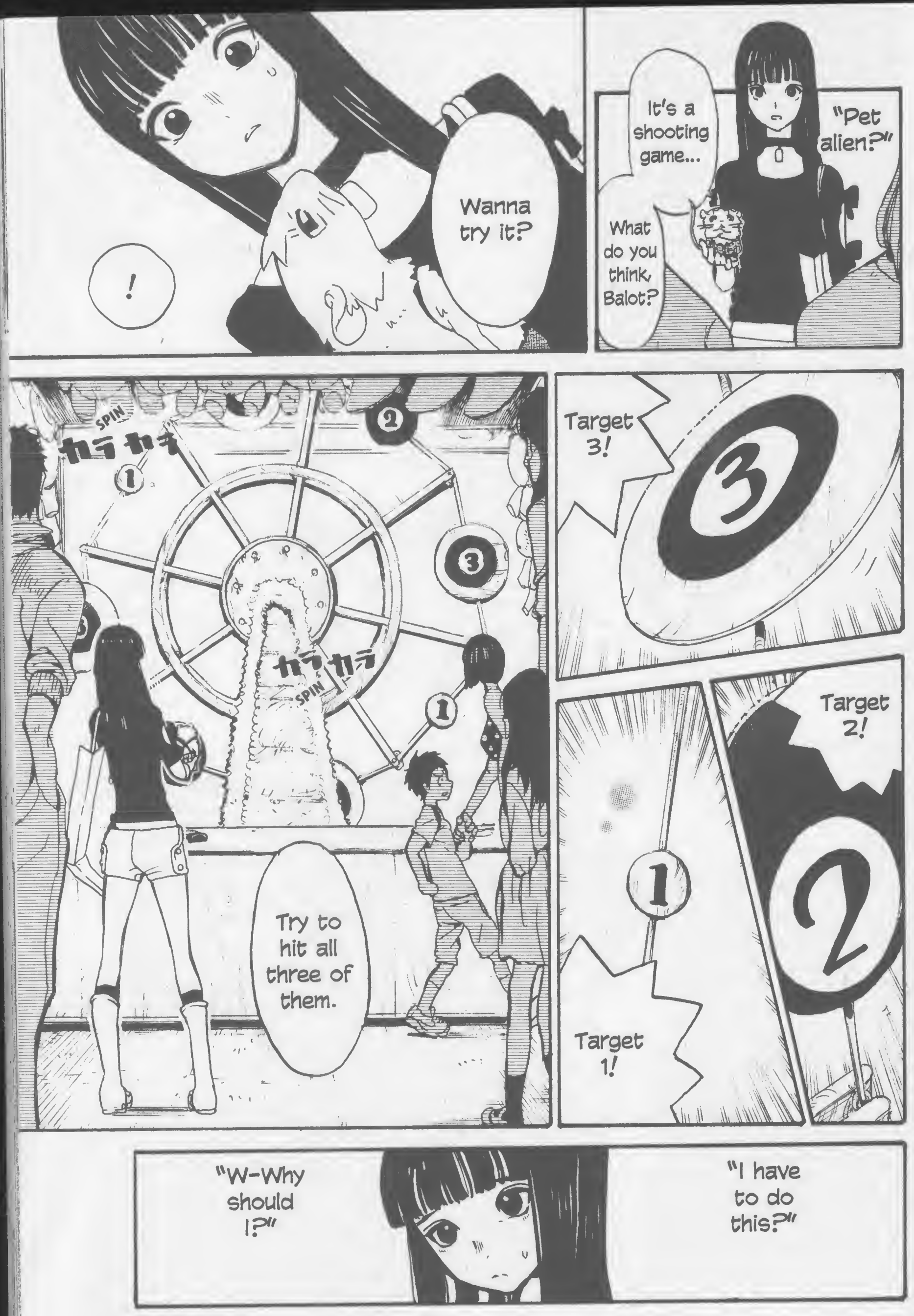

A festival!
Looks like fun!
......
"I've never been to one before. I'm not in the mood to have fun, anyway..."
......
Let's go check it out!
"I don't get festivals. No thanks."

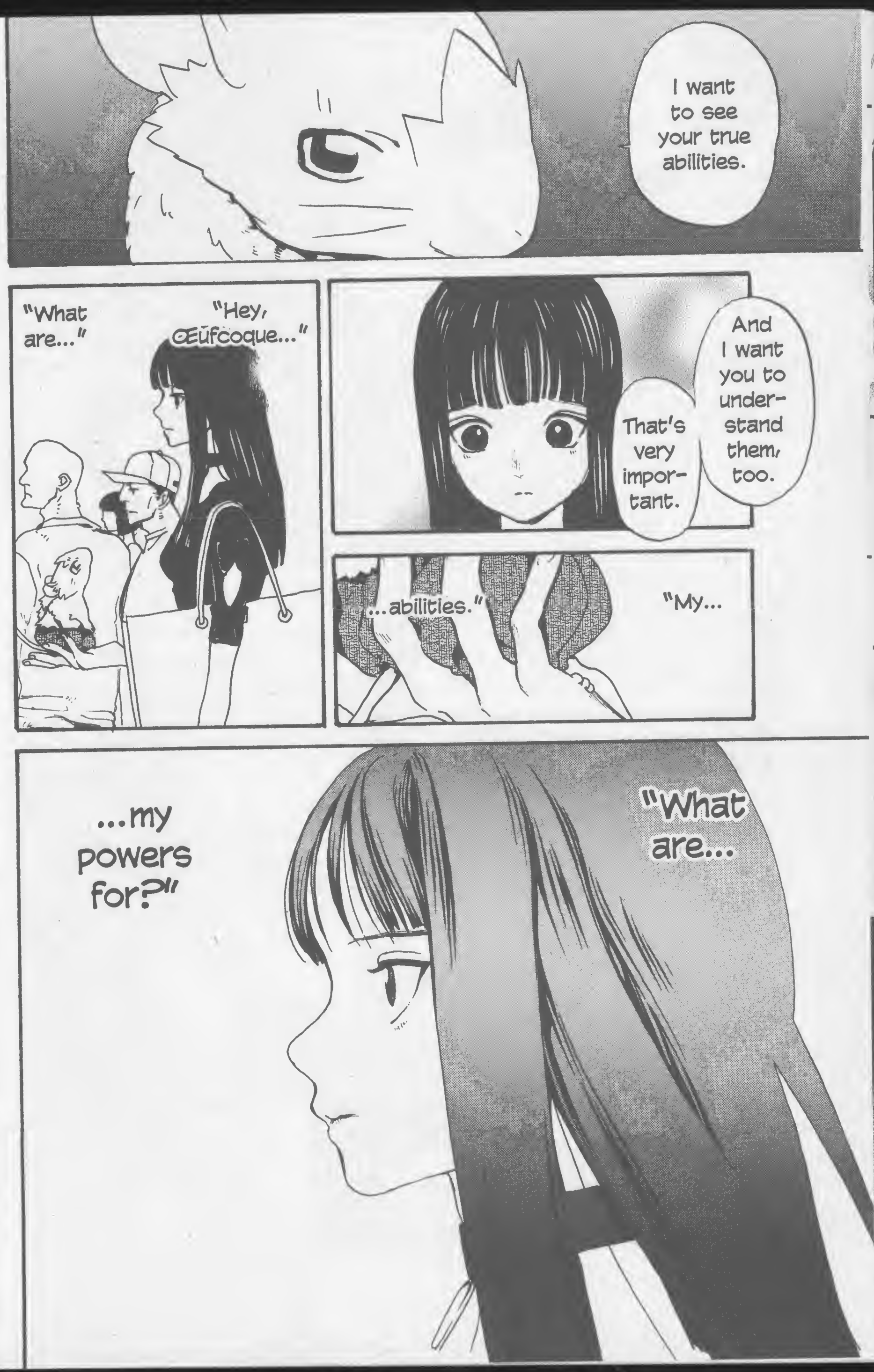

You won't know until you try!
しゅ PULL
るる
ぐいい DRAG
!?
ガシャン CRAAANK
W-
Wait!
CRANK CRANK
Let's go!
スンスン SNIFF SNIFF
Hm...
Look, it's my favorite!!
I'll take one, please!
チャリン CHING
Thanks!
"What is it?"
A sweet called a cannoli.

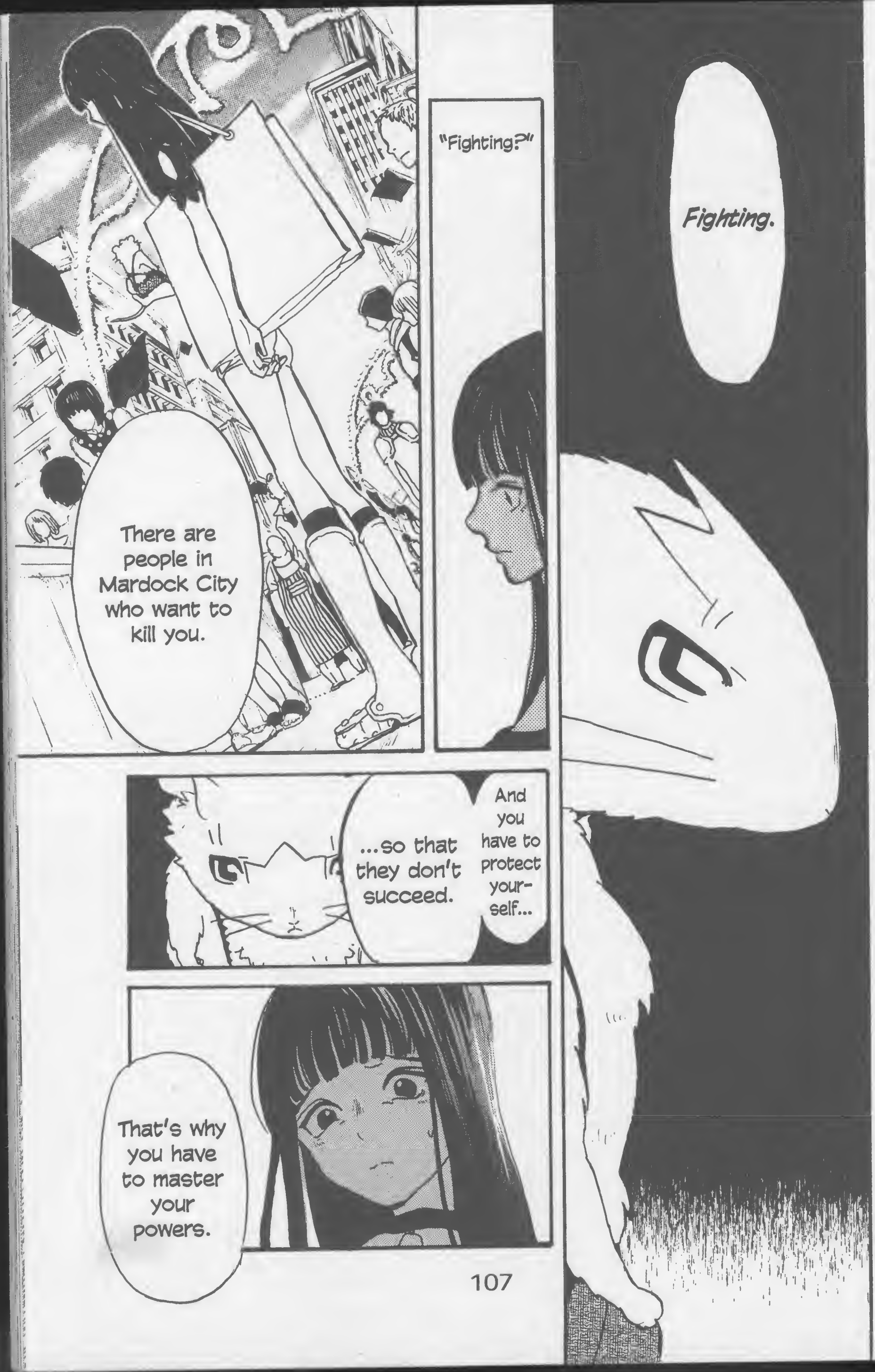

Deli-cious!!
This'll cheer you up!
ほむはむ、 MUNCH MUNCH
……
You want some?
"Um, no thanks."
……
It's good, eat some!!
もっ POP
!!

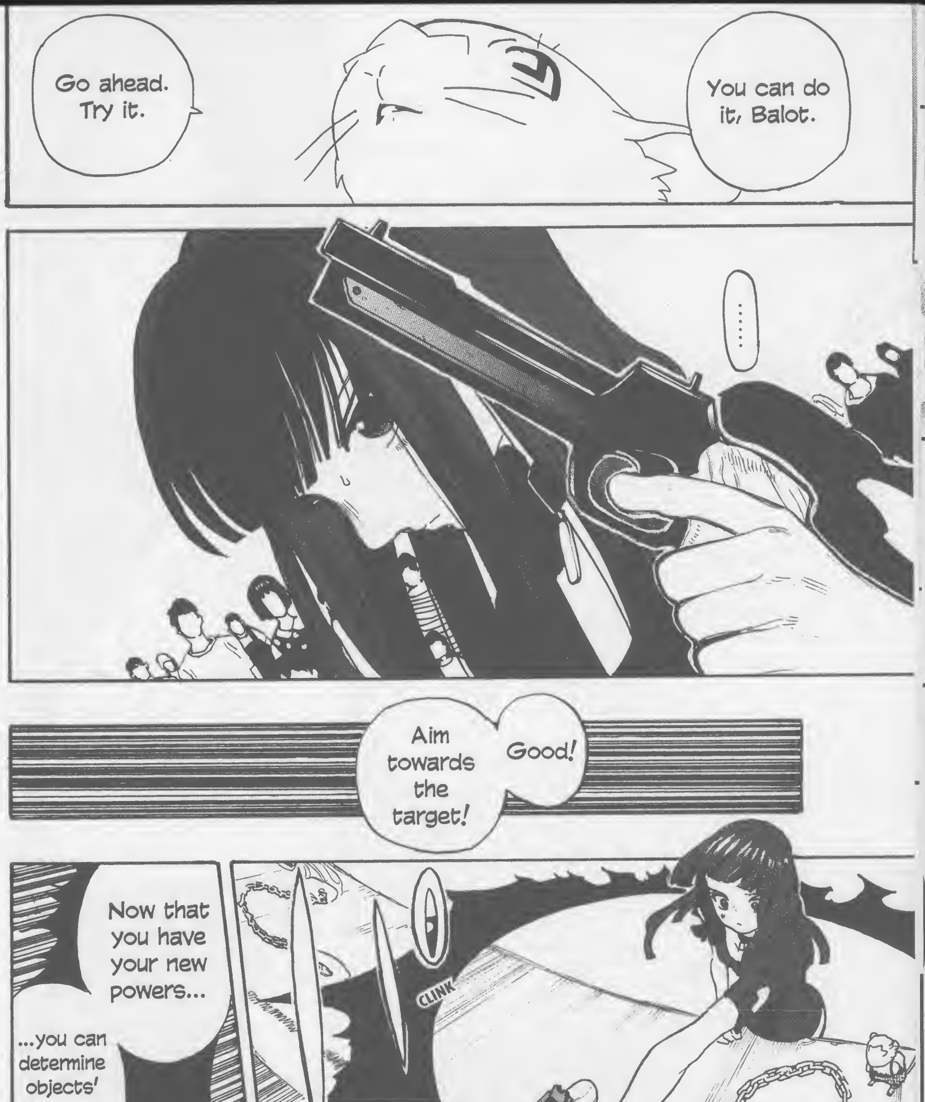

"I said I didn't want any!"
ばり CHOMP
ドキ TH-THUMP
CHEW
CHEW
UWAAAAH!
SWEET
"N-Not really..."
"Don't ever do that again, Œufcoque!"
はぐもぐ CHOMP CHOMP
……
Part of the fun of a festival is walking around eating treats like this.
It's good, isn't it?

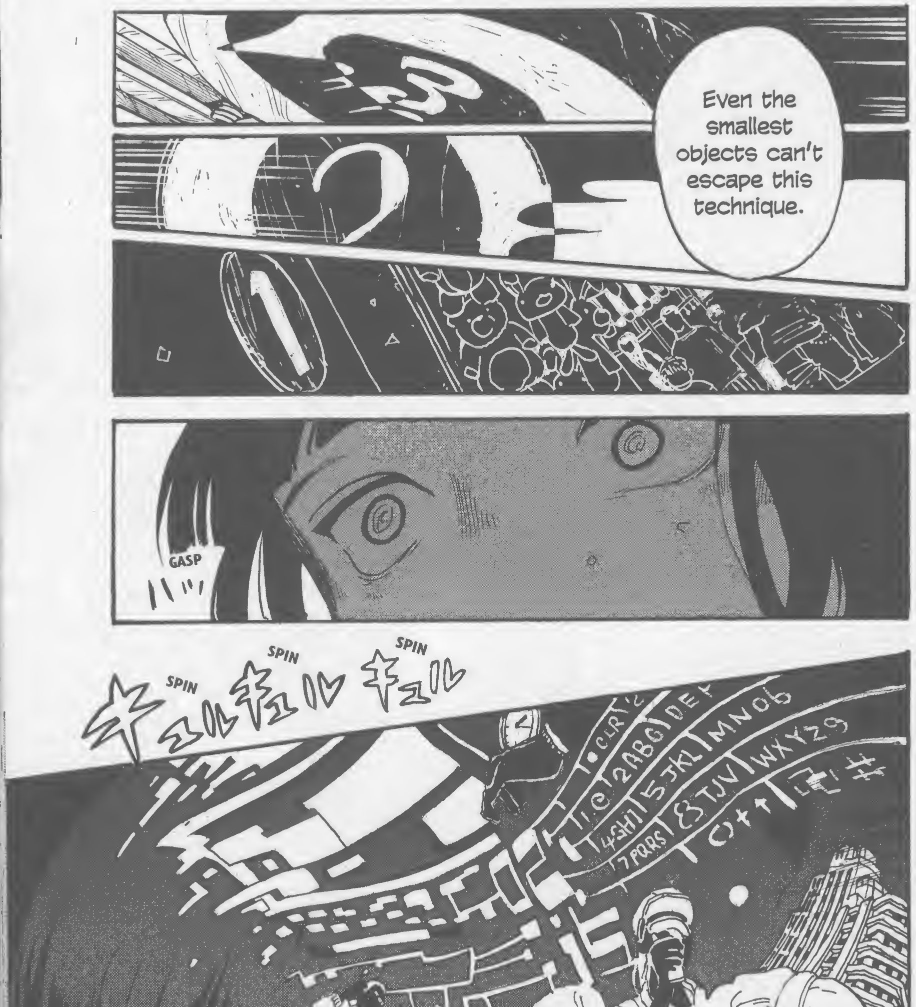

You finally said my name...
Balot.
!
ざわ CHATTER
ざわ CHATTER
Just a little longer!!
No! It's time to go now!
......?
But I haven't won anything yet!
You've been trying for two hours!
It's time to go home now!
Noooooo!!
I'm not going home until I get that pet alien!!

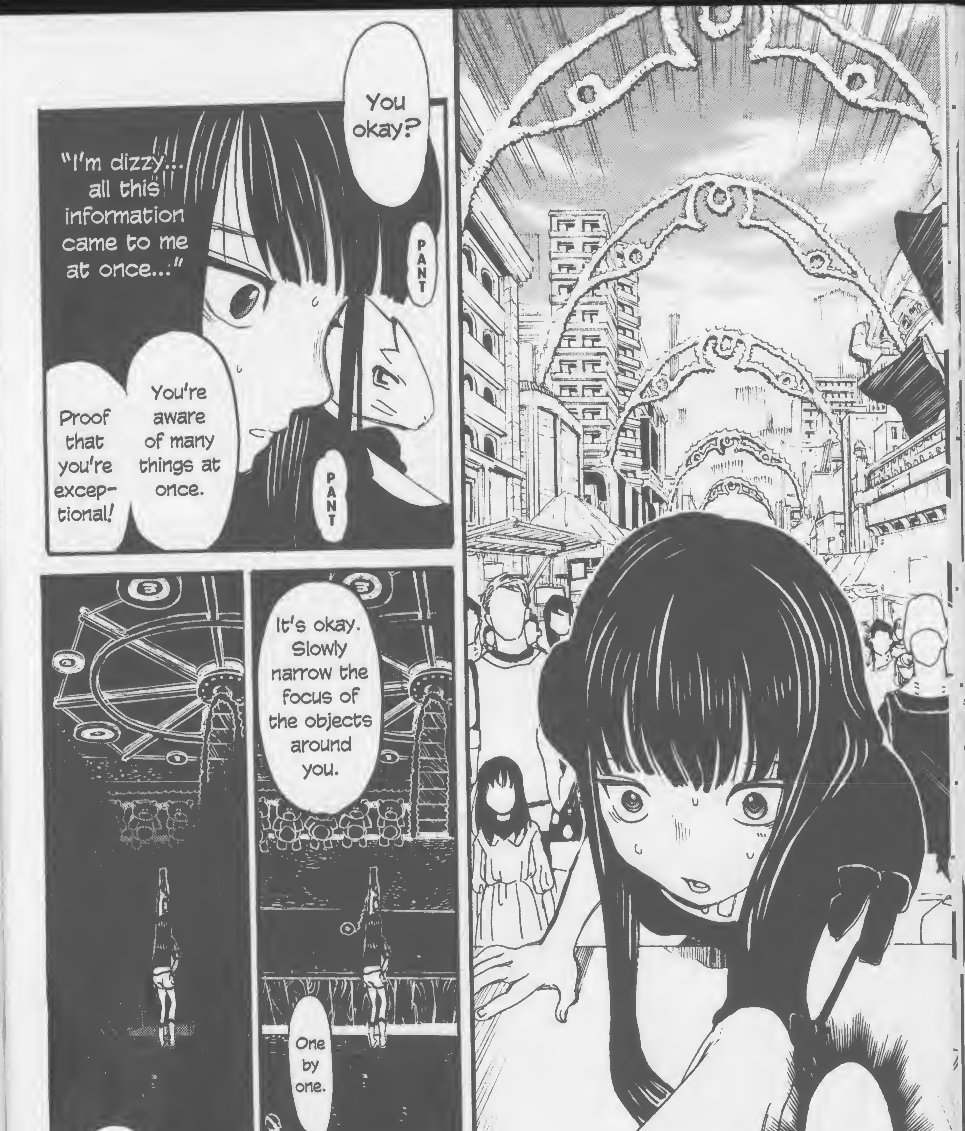

"Pet alien?"
It's a shooting game...
What do you think, Balot?
Wanna try it?
!
Target 3!
Target 2!
Target 1!
カラカラ SPIN
カラカラ SPIN
Try to hit all three of them.
"I have to do this?"
"W-Why should I?"

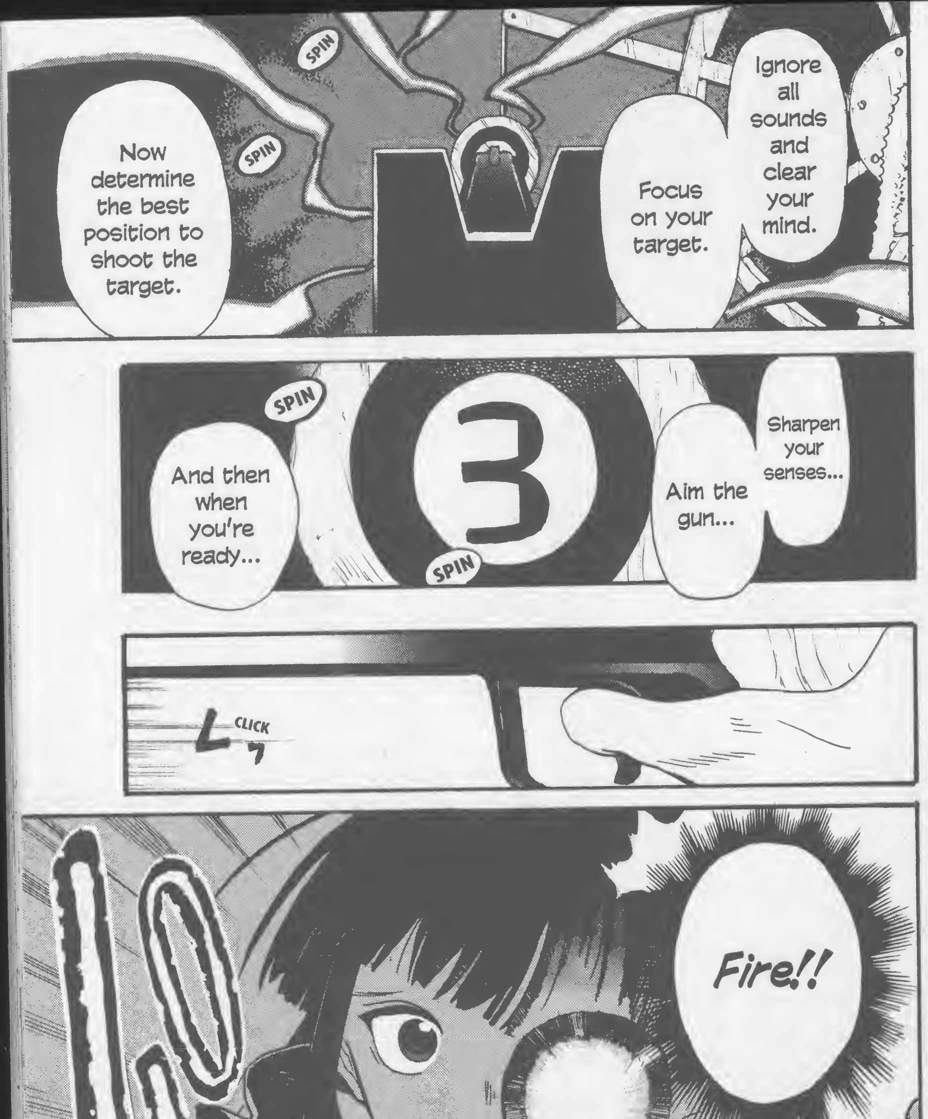

I want to see your true abilities.
And I want you to understand them, too.
That's very important.
"Hey, Œufcoque..."
"What are..."
"My...
...abilities."
"What are...
...my powers for?"

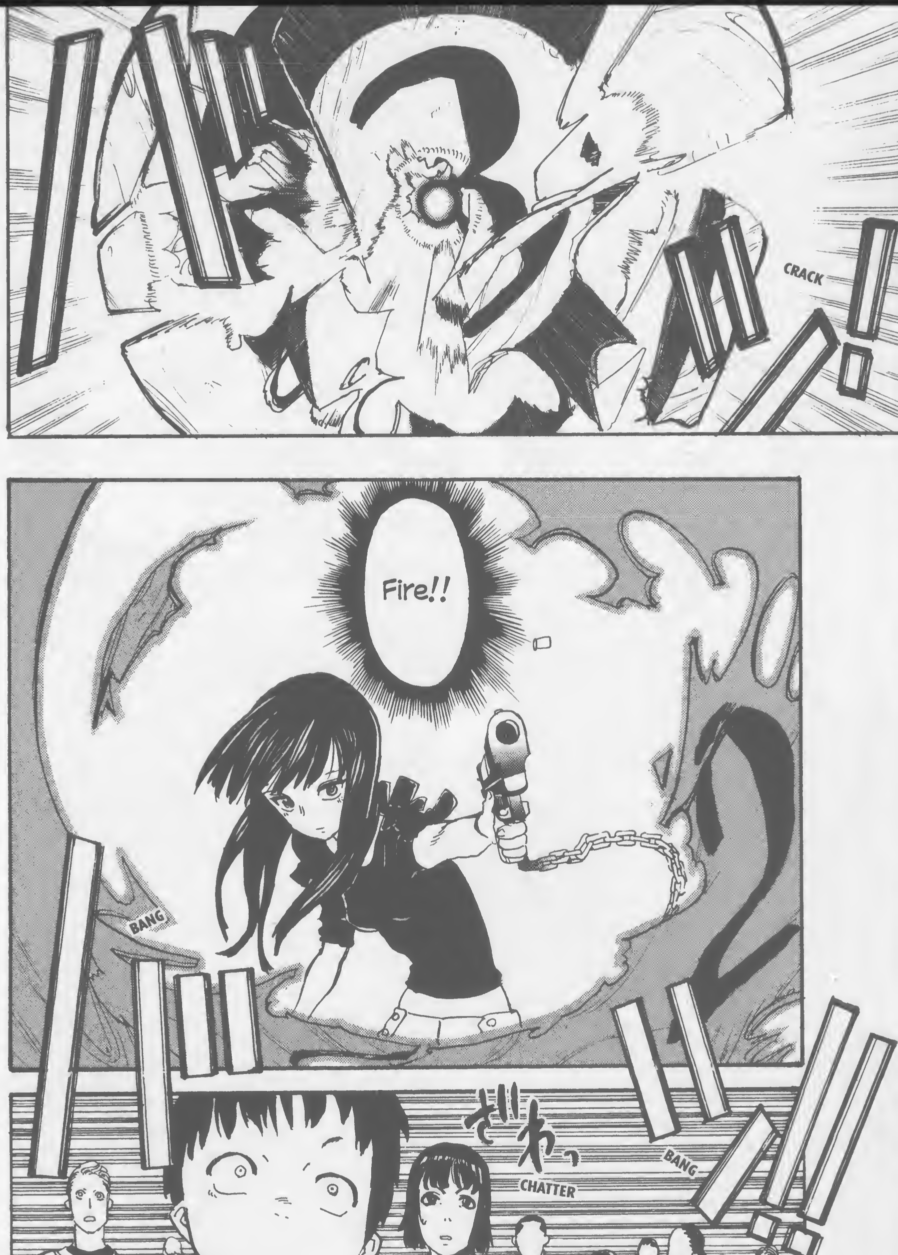

Fighting.
"Fighting?"
There are people in Mardock City who want to kill you.
And you have to protect yourself...
...so that they don't succeed.
That's why you have to master your powers.

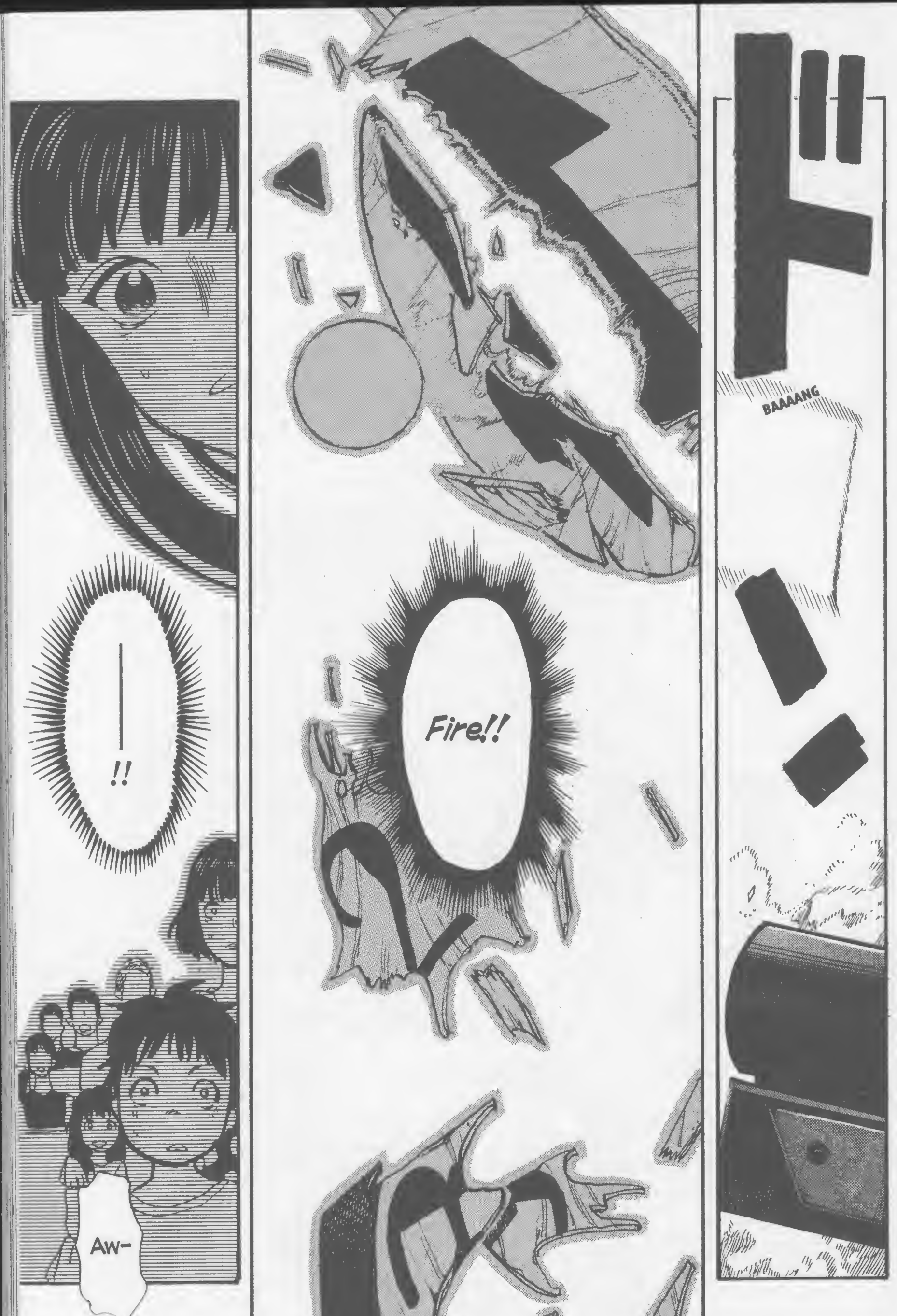

You can do it, Balot.
Go ahead. Try it.
……
Good!
Aim towards the target!
CLINK
Now that you have your new powers...
...you can determine objects' positions within moments.

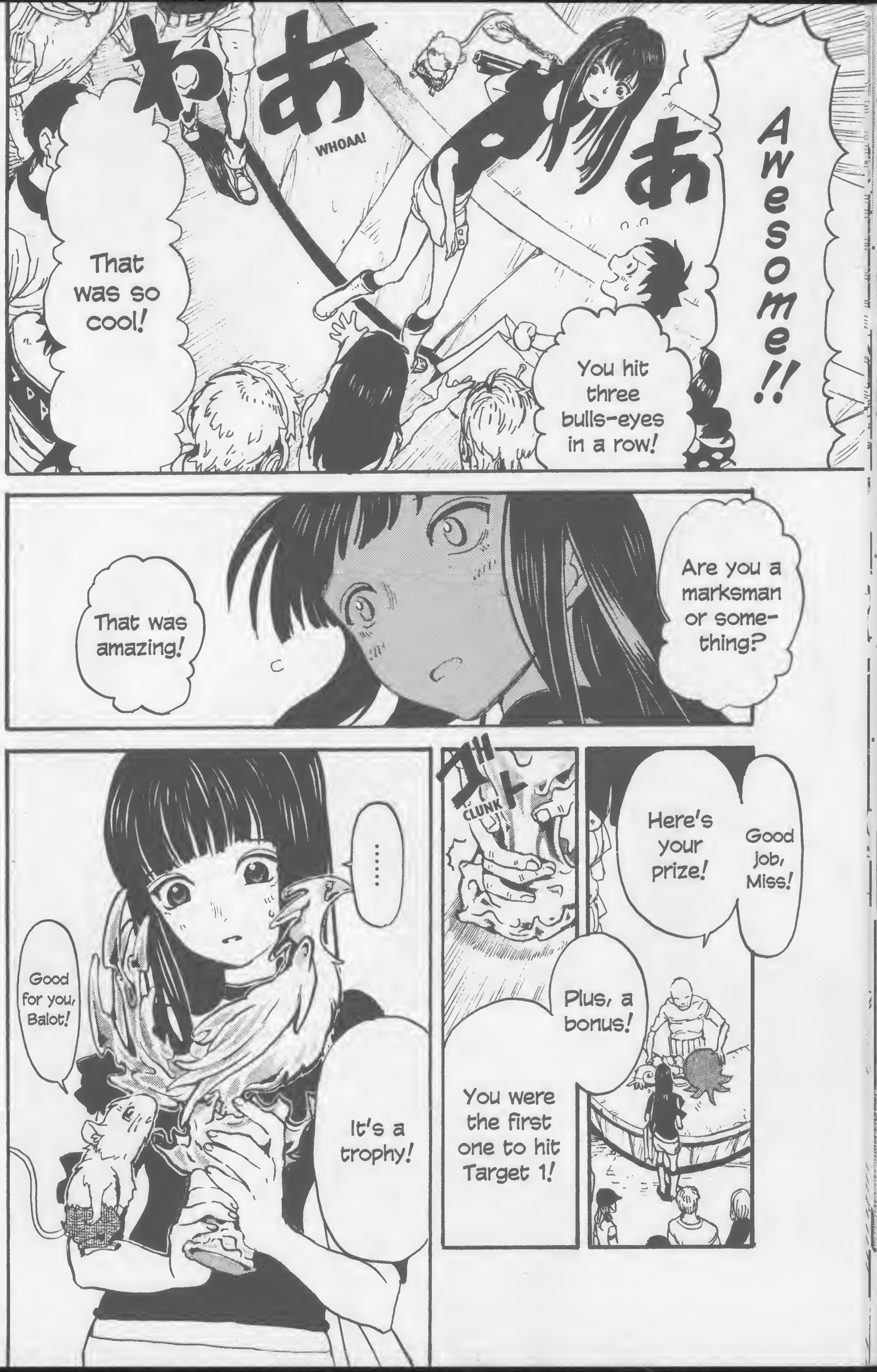

Even the smallest objects can't escape this technique.
GASP
ハッ
SPIN
SPIN
SPIN
キュルキュルキュル

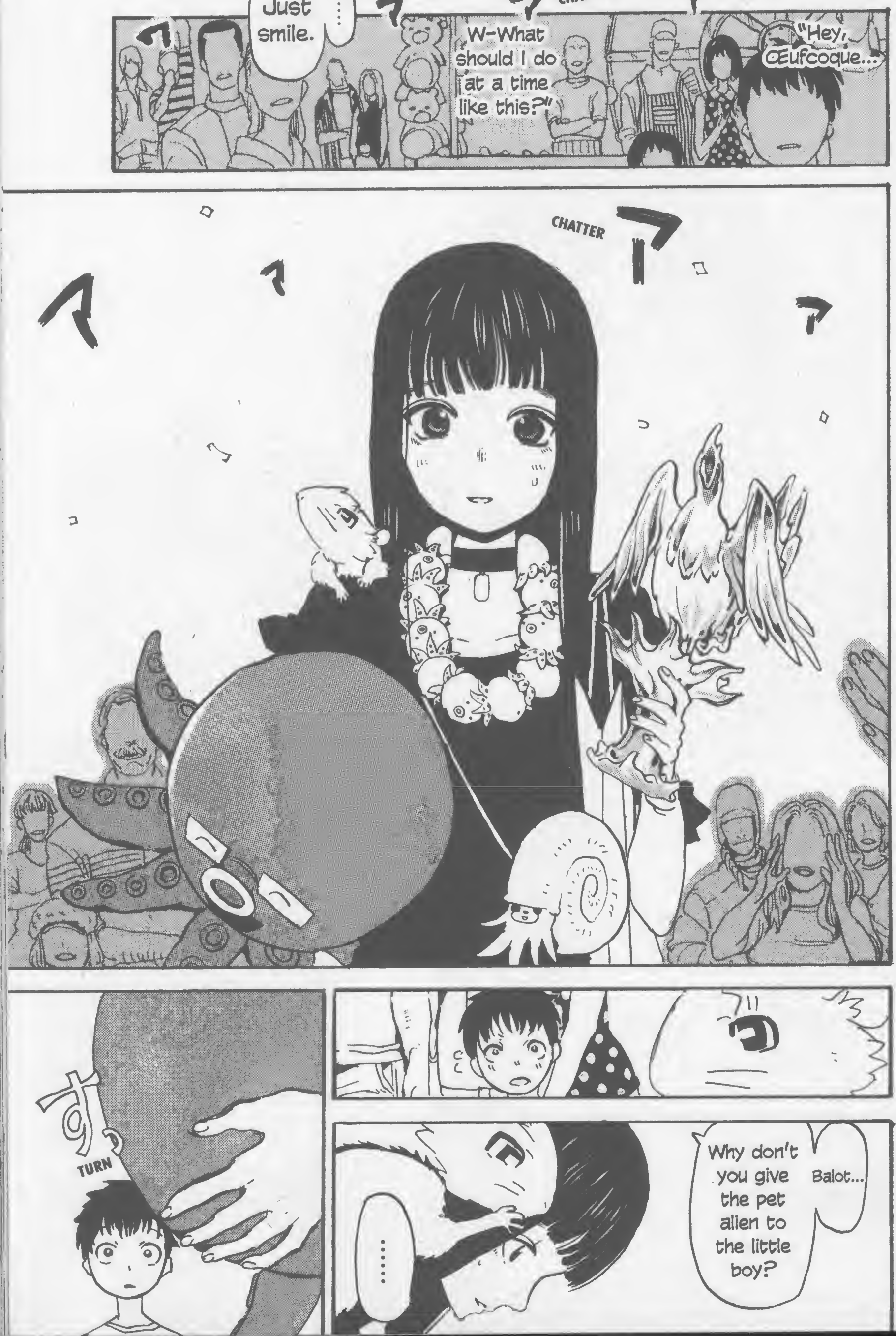

......!?
You okay?
PANT
"I'm dizzy... all this information came to me at once..."
You're aware of many things at once.
Proof that you're exceptional!
PANT
It's okay. Slowly narrow the focus of the objects around you.
One by one.
And then concentrate just on your target.

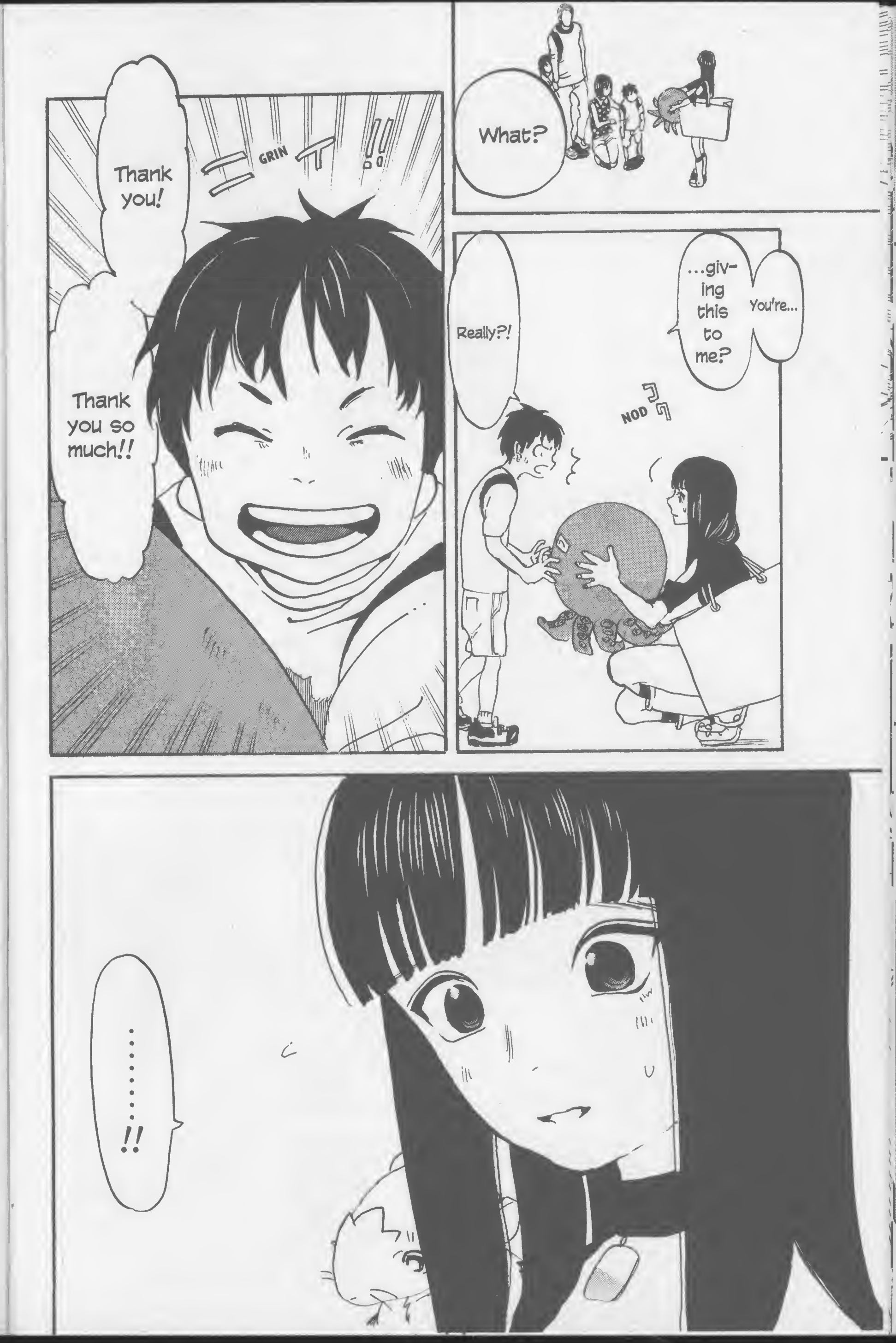

Ignore all sounds and clear your mind.
SPIN
Focus on your target.
SPIN
Now determine the best position to shoot the target.
Sharpen your senses...
Aim the gun...
SPIN
3
SPIN
And then when you're ready...
CLICK
Fire!!
BANG

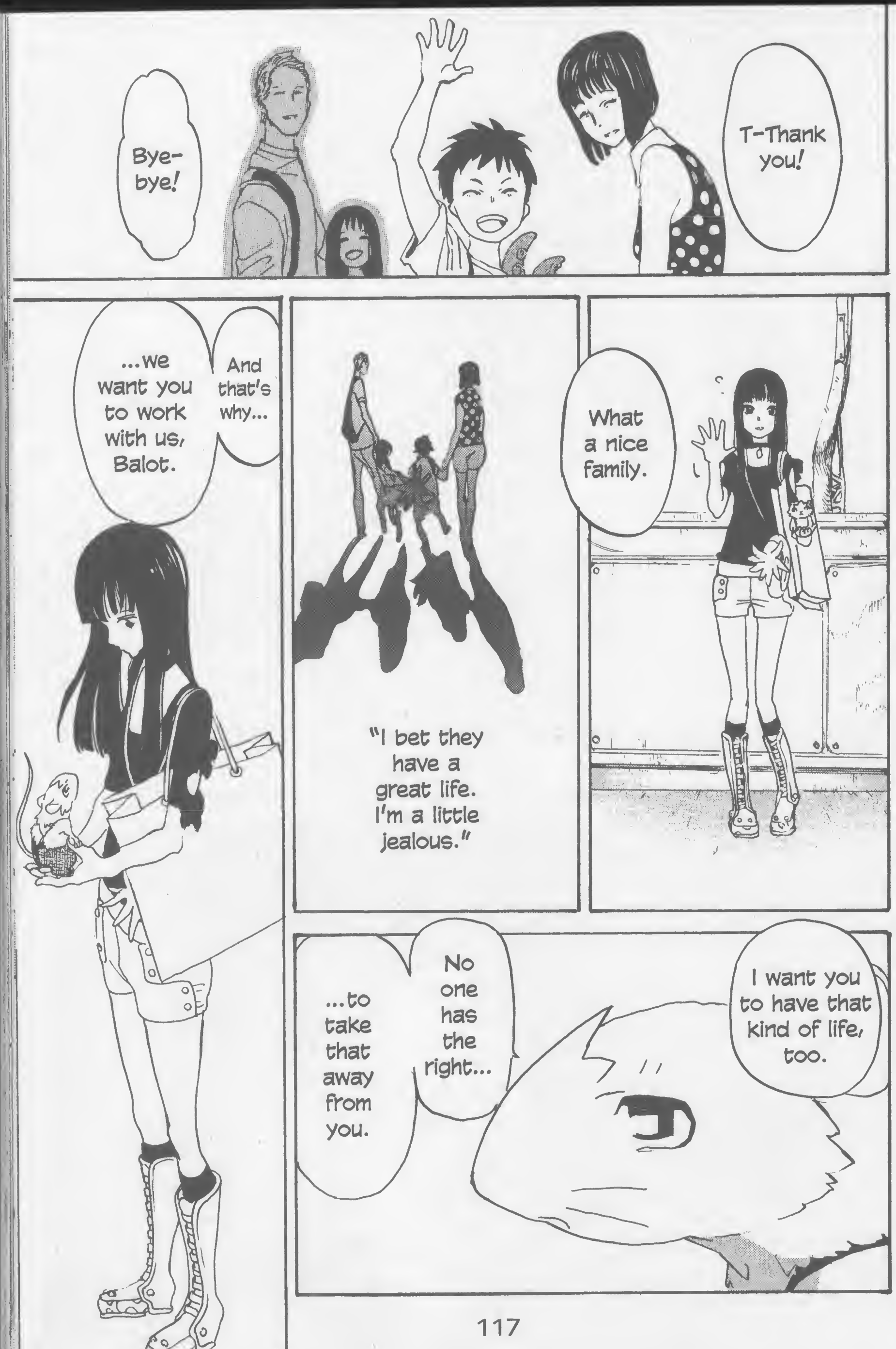

CRACK
Fire!!
BANG
ざわっ
CHATTER
BANG

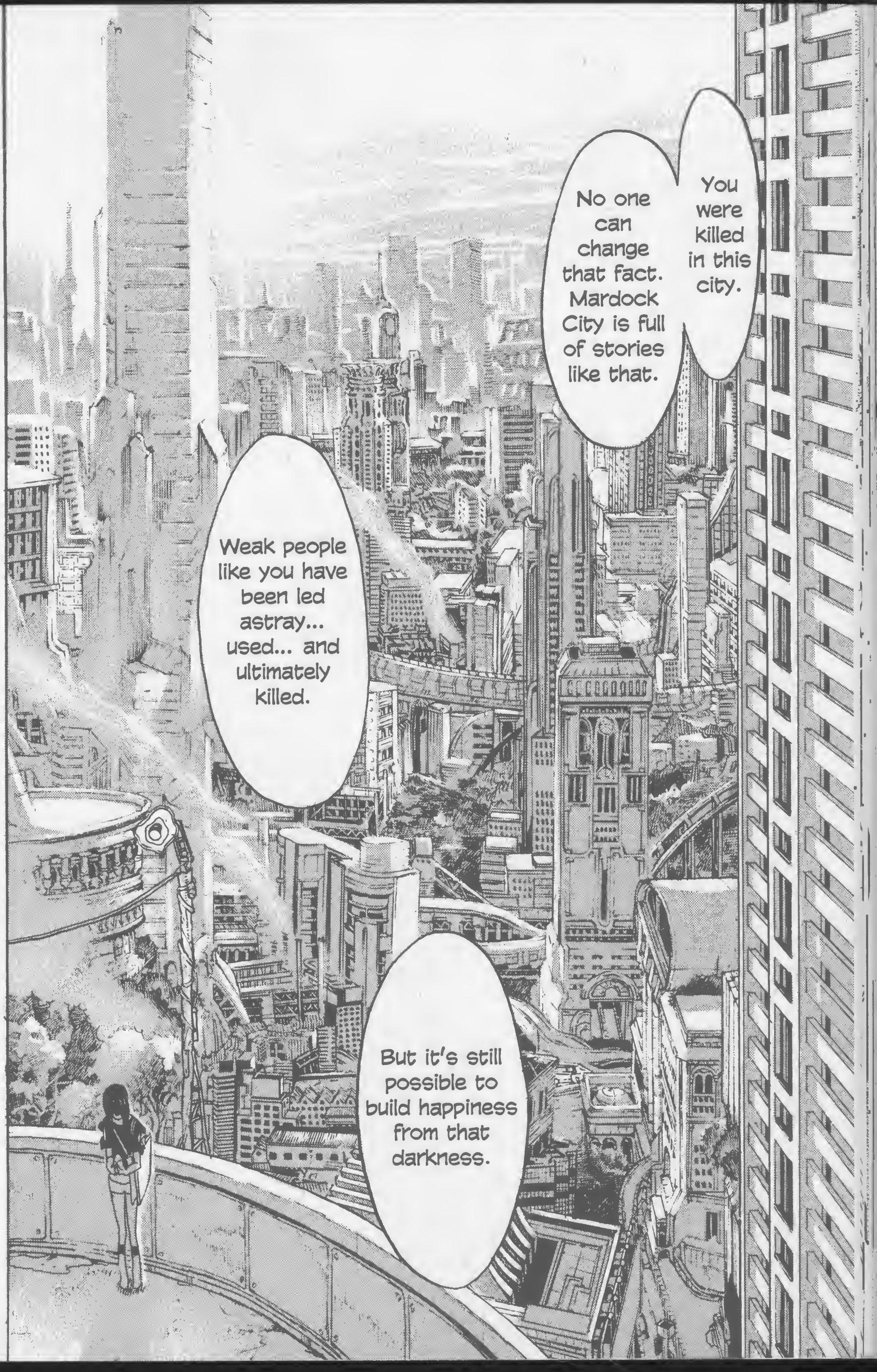

ド
BAAAANG
Fire!!
—!!
Aw-

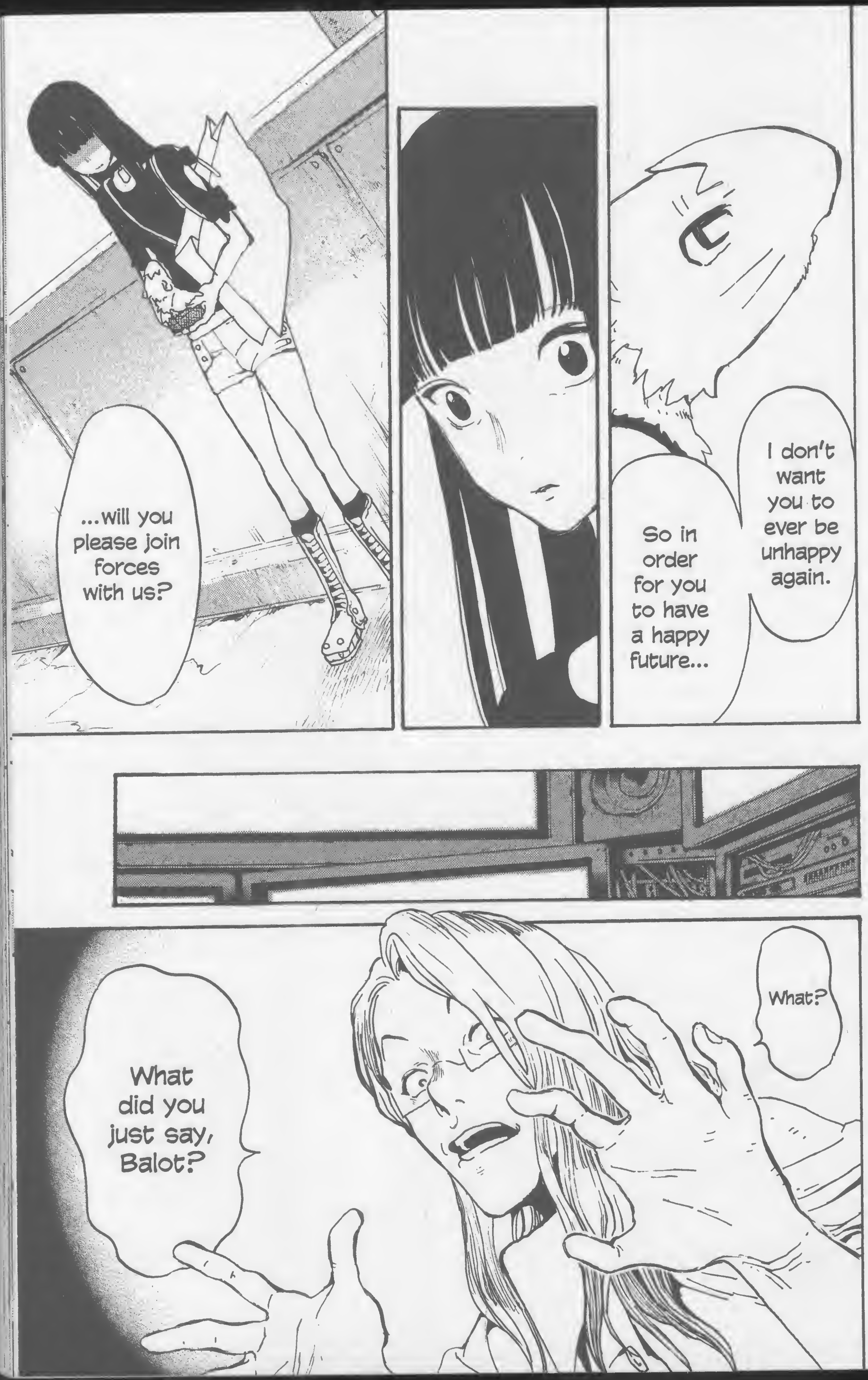

わあ
あ
Awesome!!
WHOAA!
You hit three bulls-eyes in a row!
That was so cool!
Are you a marksman or some-thing?
That was amazing!
Good job, Miss!
Here's your prize!
CLUNK
Plus, a bonus!
You were the first one to hit Target 1!
......
It's a trophy!
Good for you, Balot!

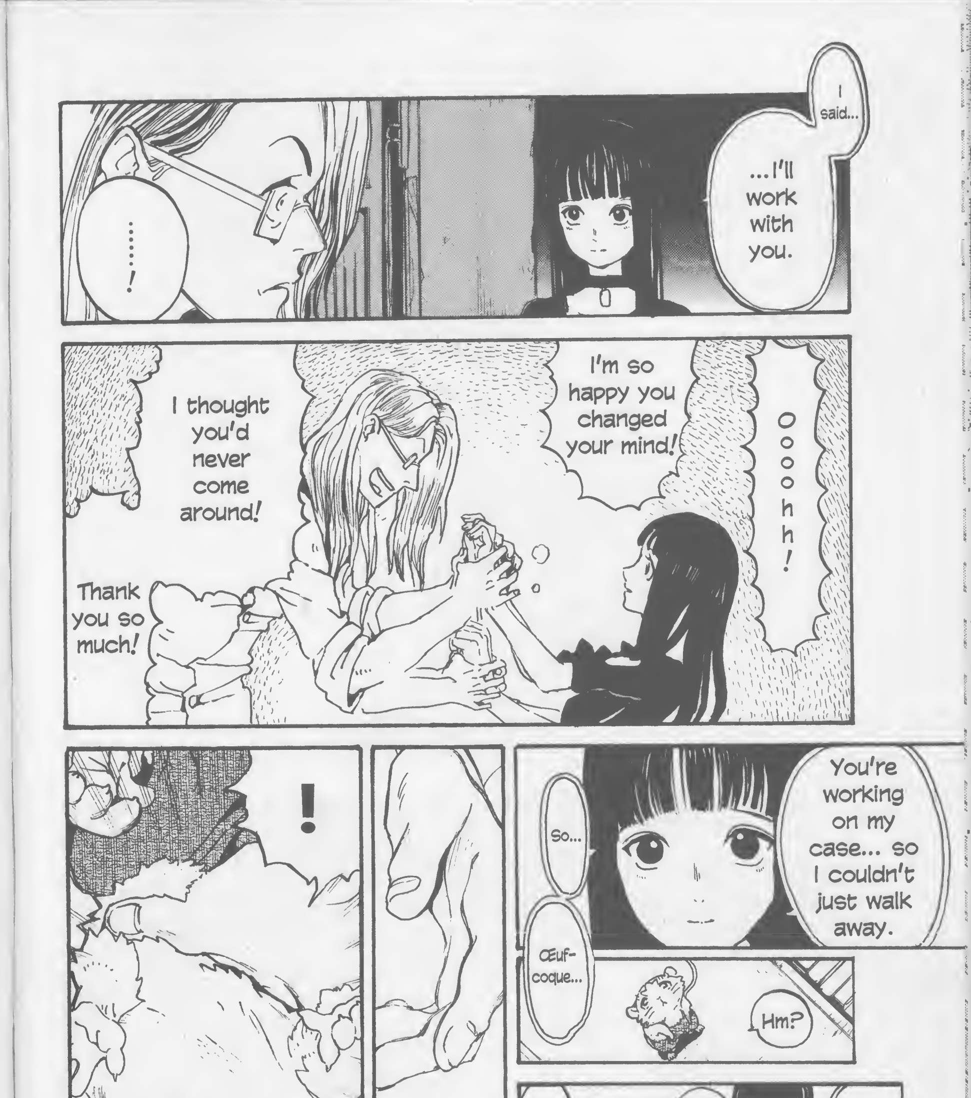

"Hey, Œufcoque...
CHATTER
W-What should I do at a time like this?"
......
Just smile.
CHATTER
TURN
す
Balot...
Why don't you give the pet alien to the little boy?
......

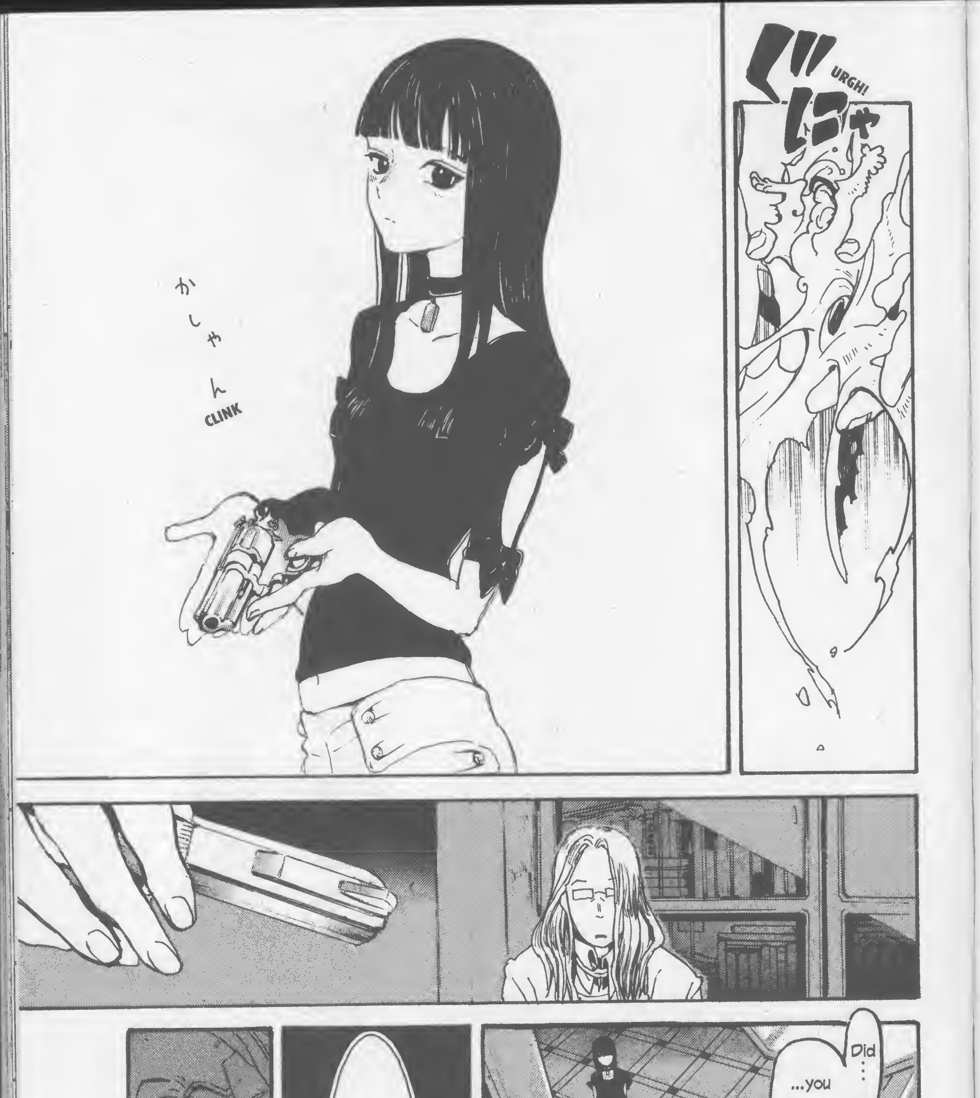

What?
You're...
...giving this to me?
Really?!
NOD
Thank you!
GRIN
Thank you so much!!
..........!!

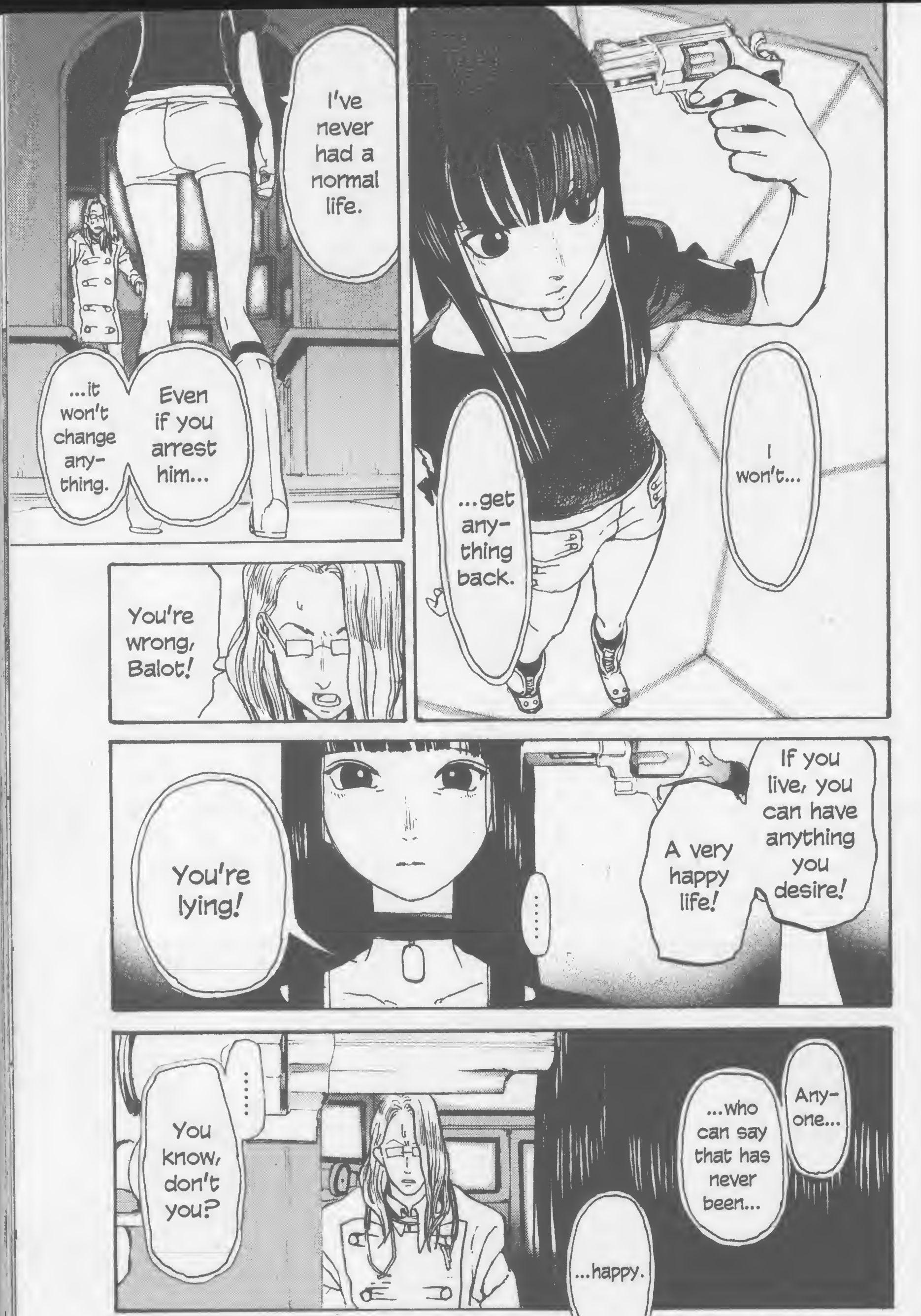

T-Thank you!
Bye-bye!
What a nice family.
"I bet they have a great life. I'm a little jealous."
And that's why...
...we want you to work with us, Balot.
I want you to have that kind of life, too.
No one has the right...
...to take that away from you.

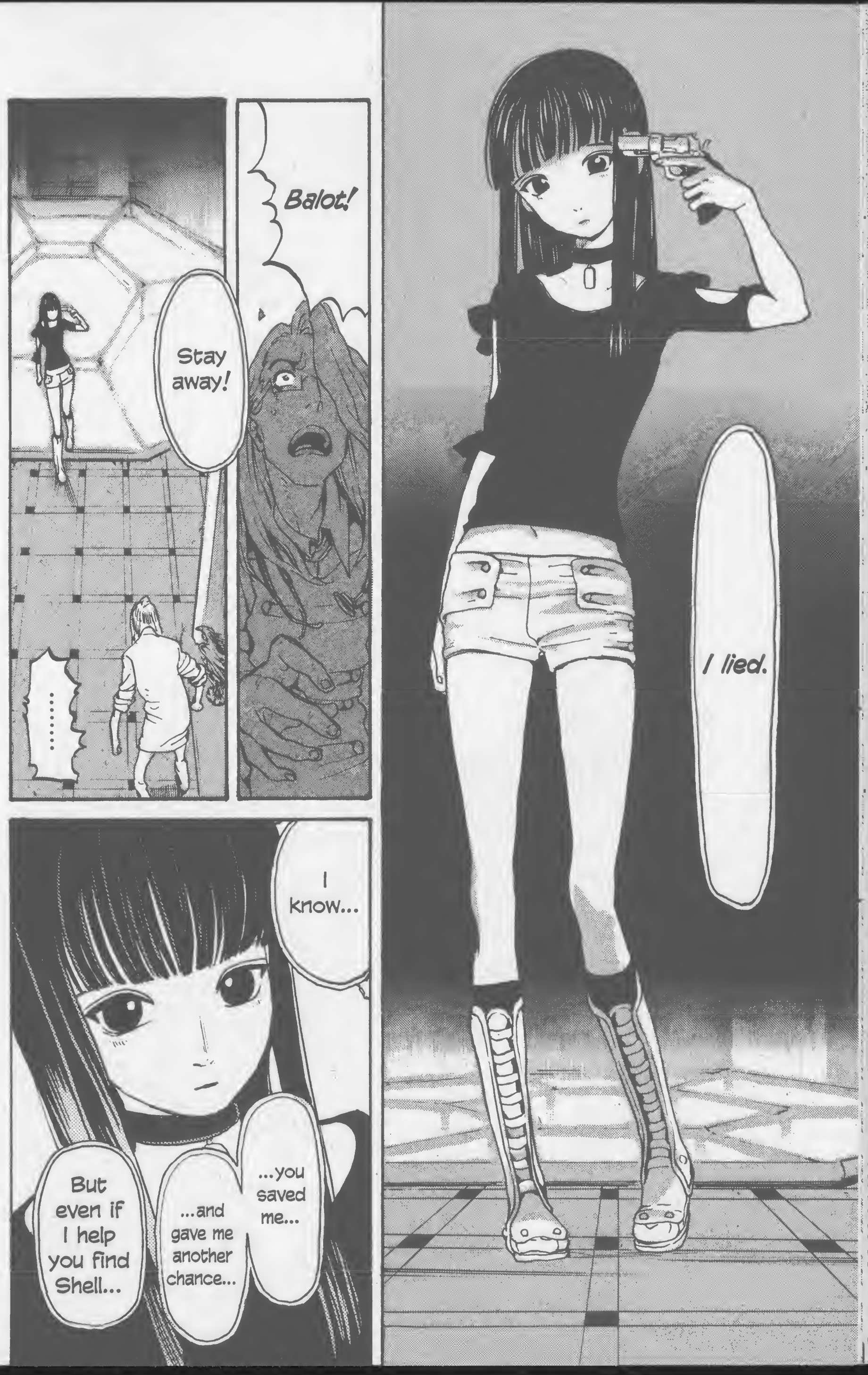

You were killed in this city.
No one can change that fact. Mardock City is full of stories like that.
Weak people like you have been led astray... used... and ultimately killed.
But it's still possible to build happiness from that darkness.

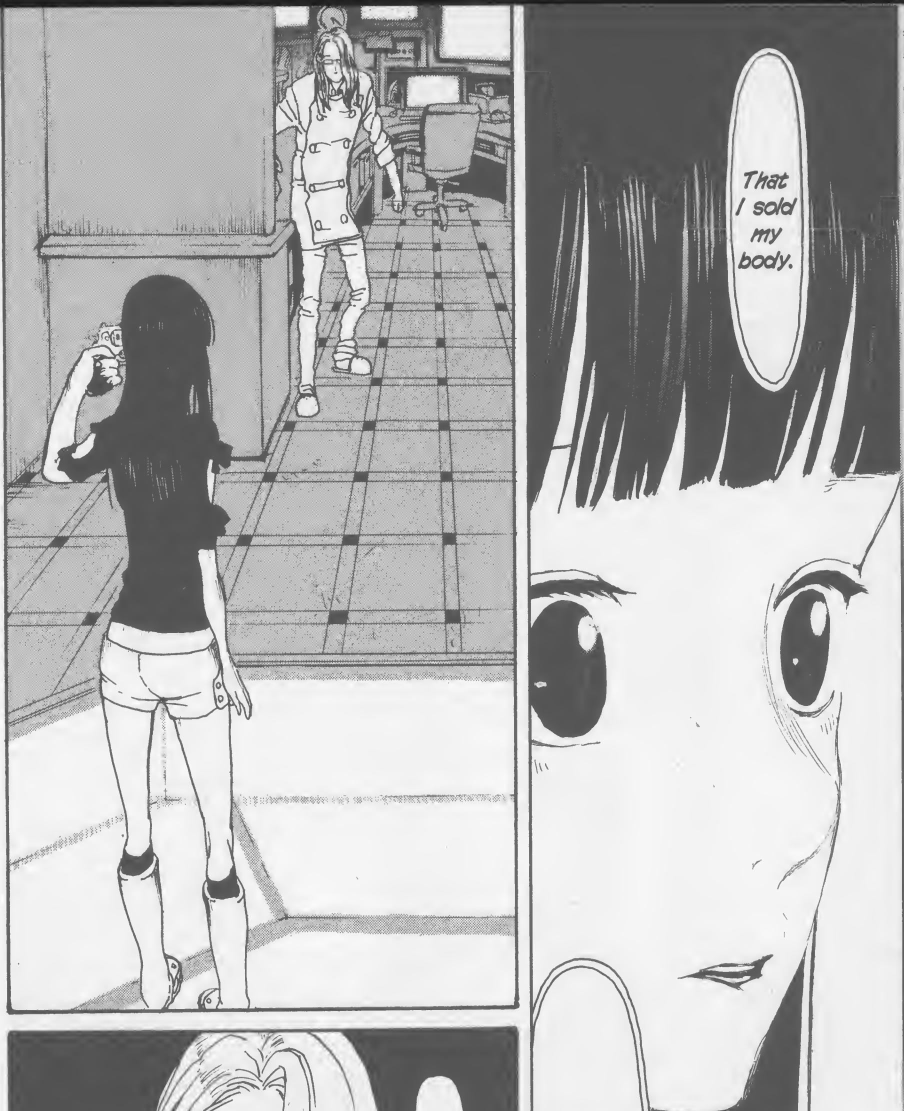

I don't want you to ever be unhappy again.
So in order for you to have a happy future...
...will you please join forces with us?
What?
What did you just say, Balot?

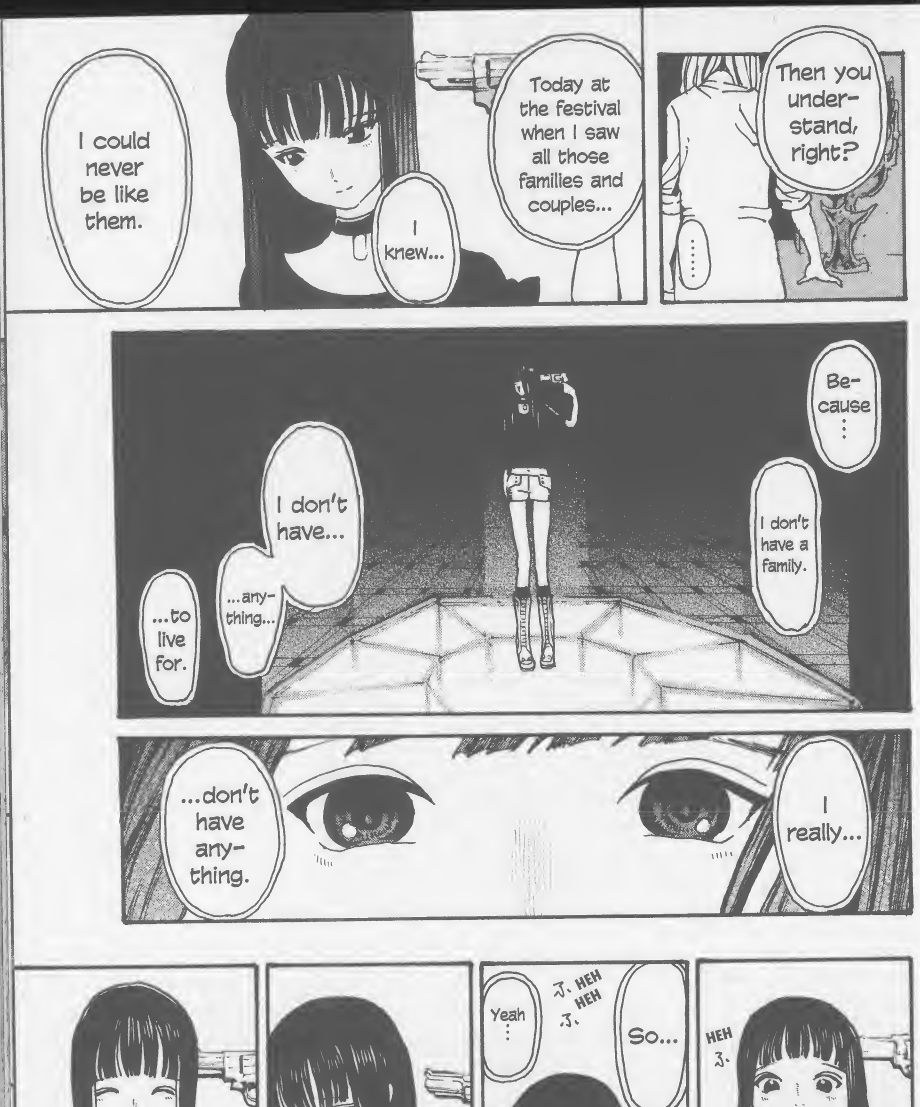

I said...
...I'll work with you.
......!
Ooooh h!
I'm so happy you changed your mind!
I thought you'd never come around!
Thank you so much!
You're working on my case... so I couldn't just walk away.
So...
Œuf-coque...
Hm?
Let's work together, okay?
TOUCH
Okay!
!
むに!
SQUEAK!

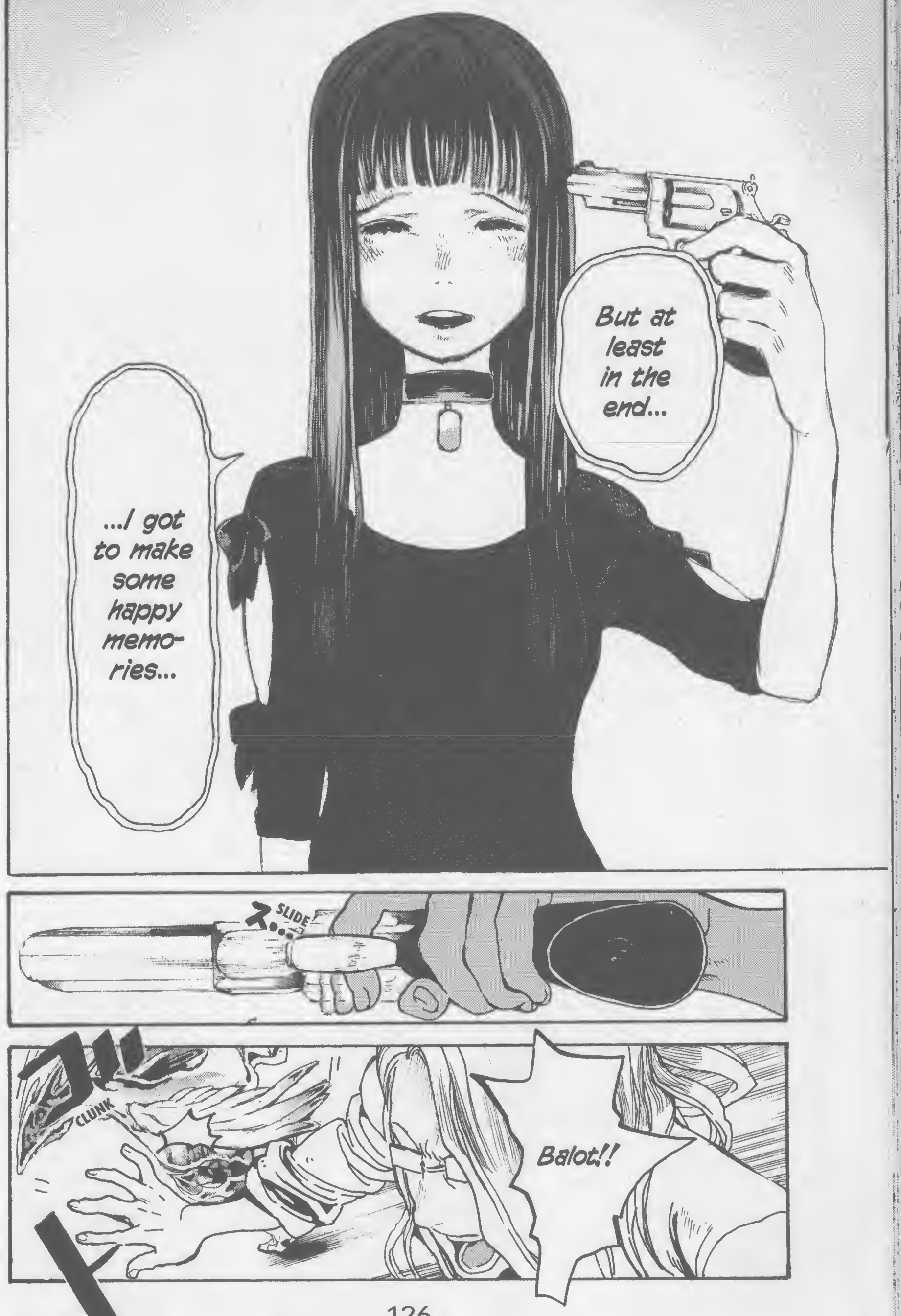

ぐにゃ
URGH!
かしゃん
CLINK
Did...
...you use snarc to make that?
What...
What are you going to do with that?
I'm sorry.
What?

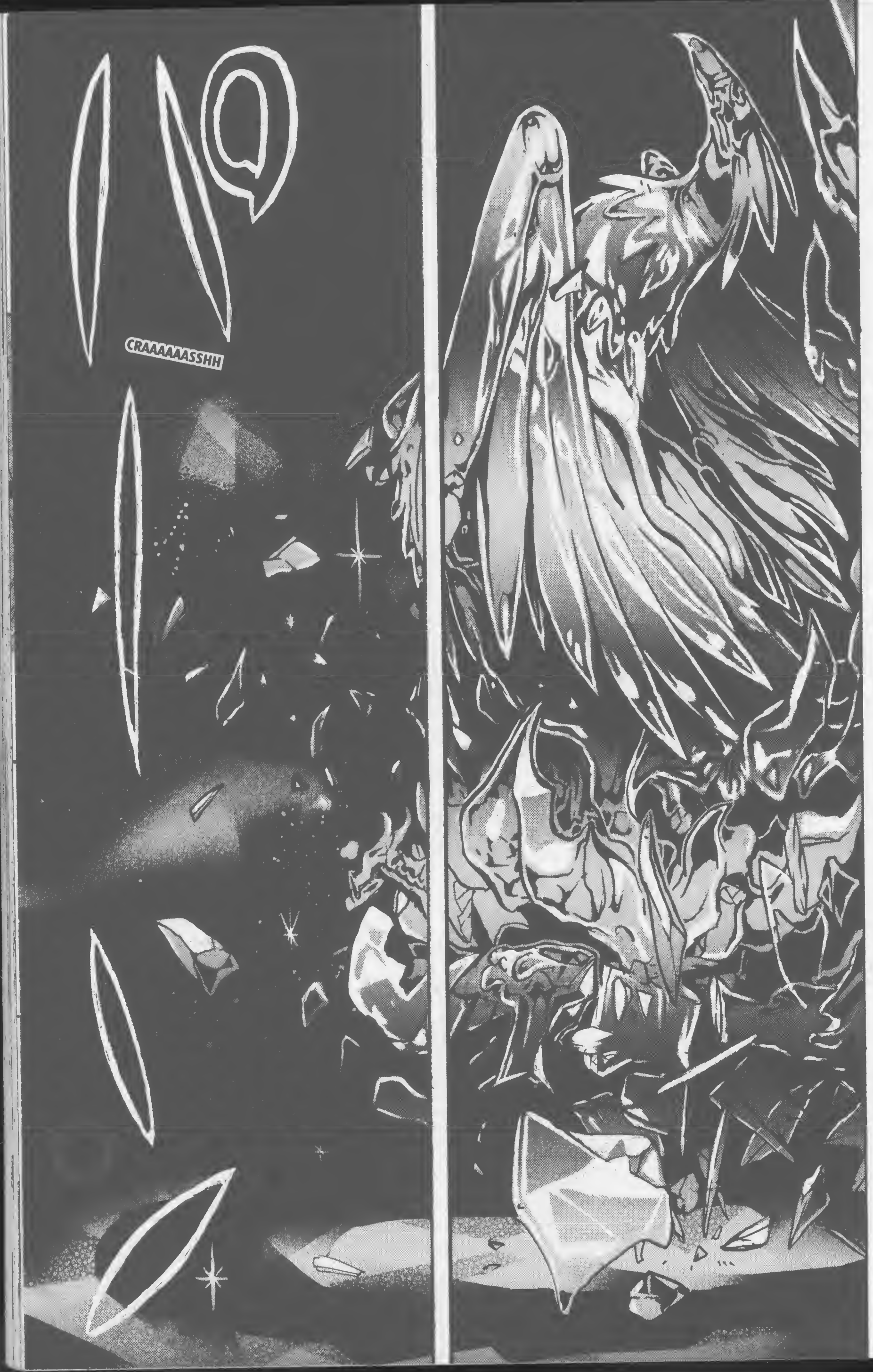

I've never had a normal life.
Even if you arrest him...
...it won't change anything.
I won't...
...get anything back.
You're wrong, Balot!
If you live, you can have anything you desire!
A very happy life!
......
You're lying!
Anyone...
...who can say that has never been...
...happy.
......
You know, don't you?

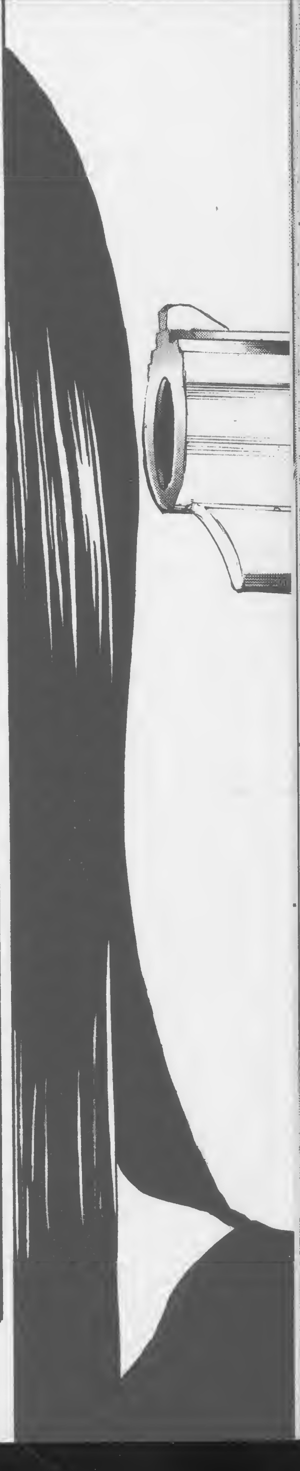

Balot!
Stay away!
......
I know...
...you saved me...
...and gave me another chance...
But even if I help you find Shell...
I lied.

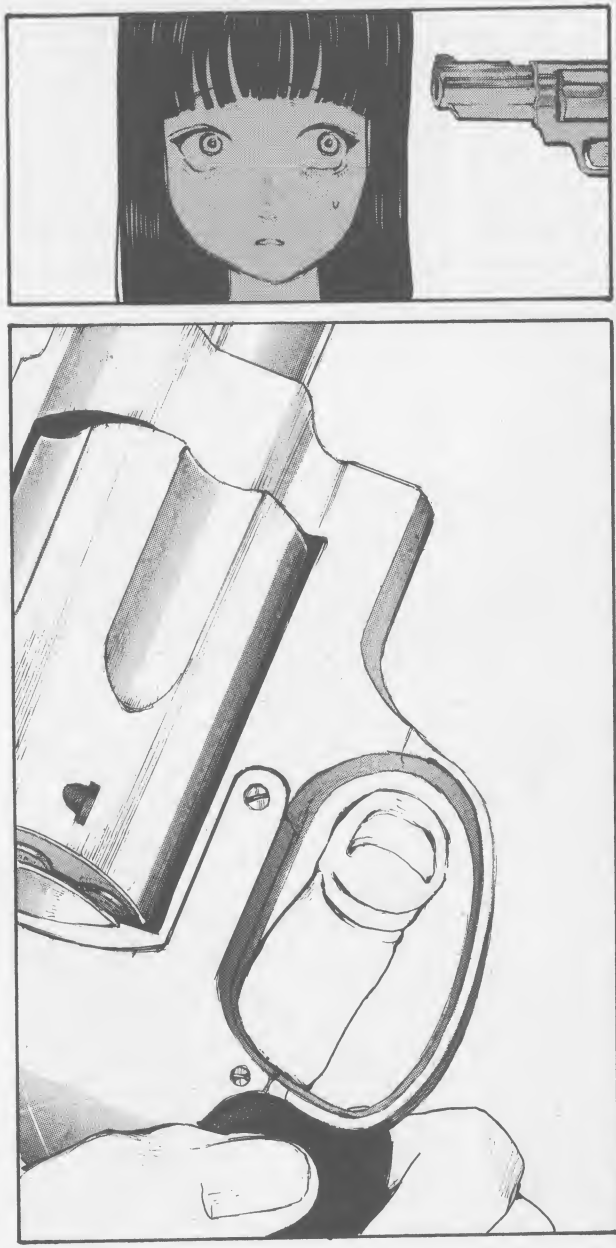

That I sold my body.
That I was a prostitute.
Yes.
I know.

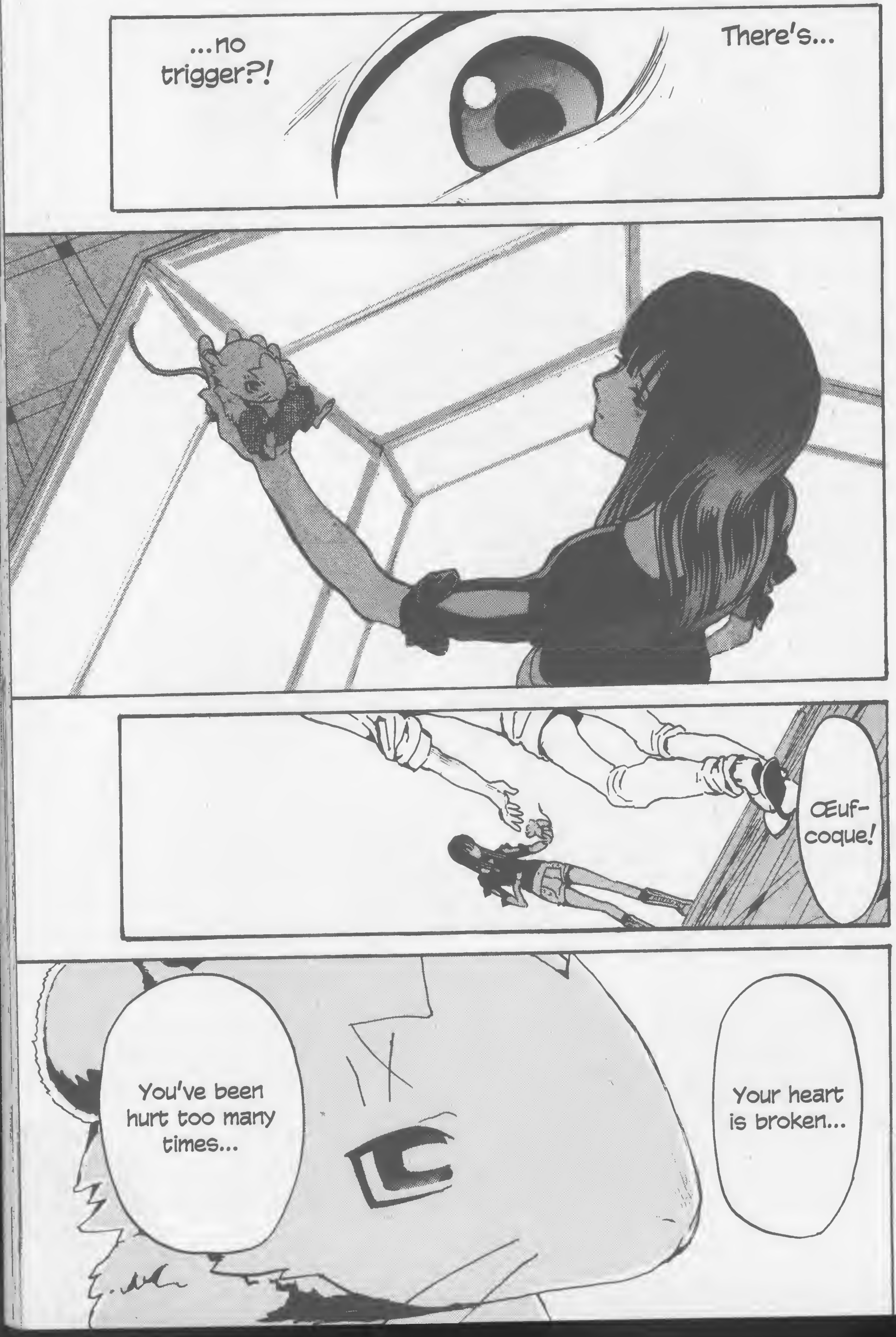

Then you understand, right?
......
Today at the festival when I saw all those families and couples...
I knew...
I could never be like them.
Because...
I don't have a family.
I don't have...
...anything...
...to live for.
I really...
...don't have anything.
Sorry I lied and said I'd help you.
Well... That's about it.
HEH ふ
So...
HEH HEH ふ ふ
Yeah...
Sorry for all the trouble...

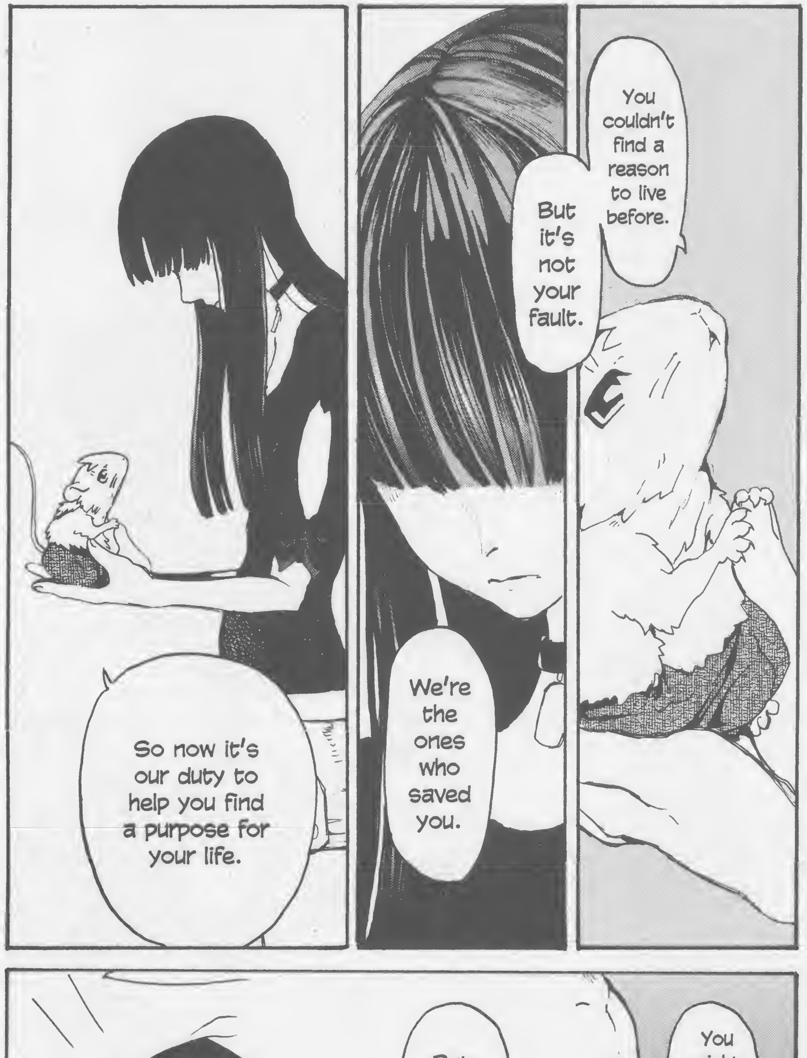

But at least in the end...
...I got to make some happy memories...
SLIDE
CLUNK
Balot!!

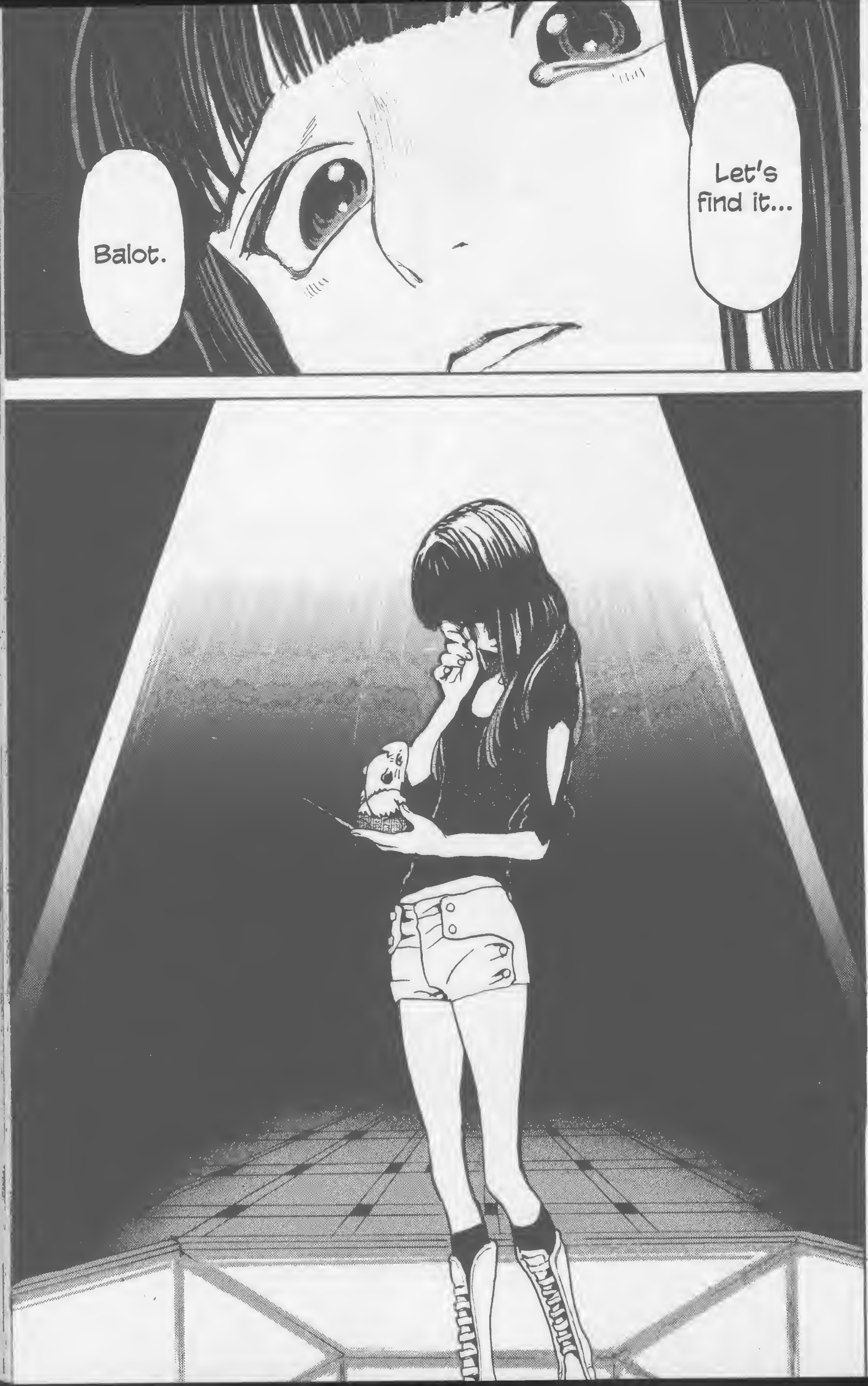

CRAAAAAASSHH

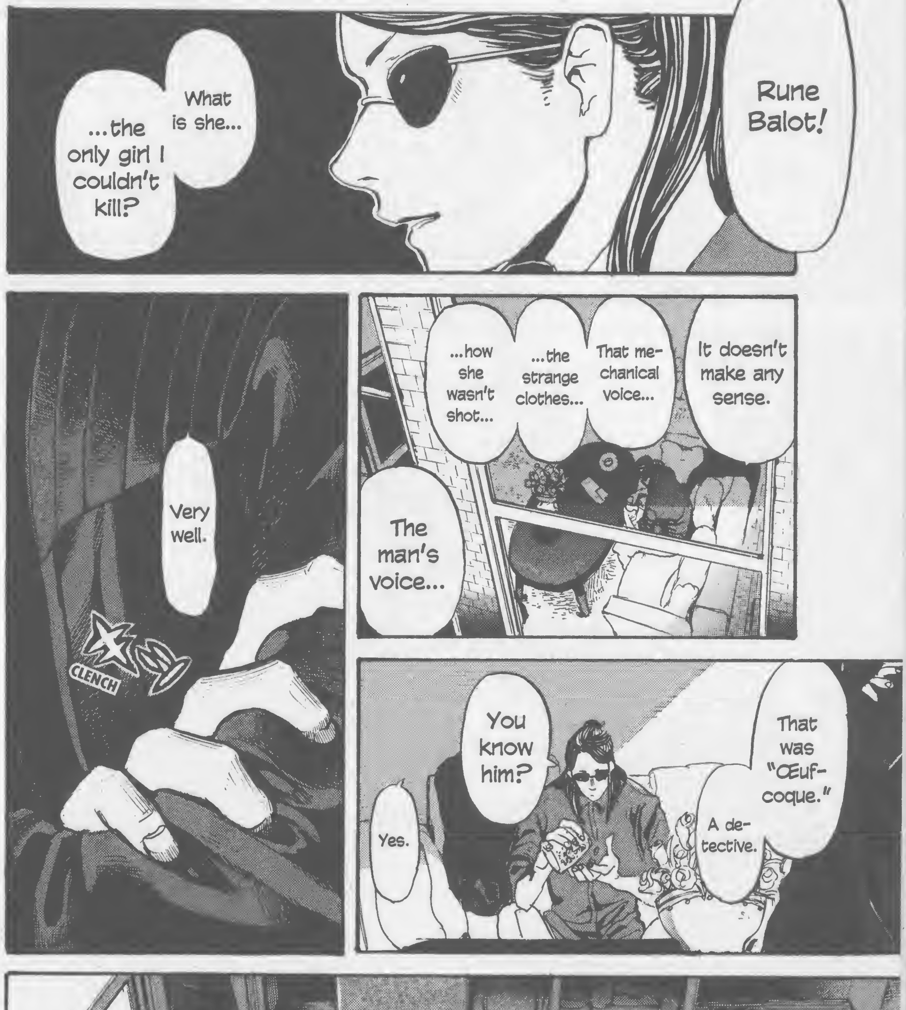


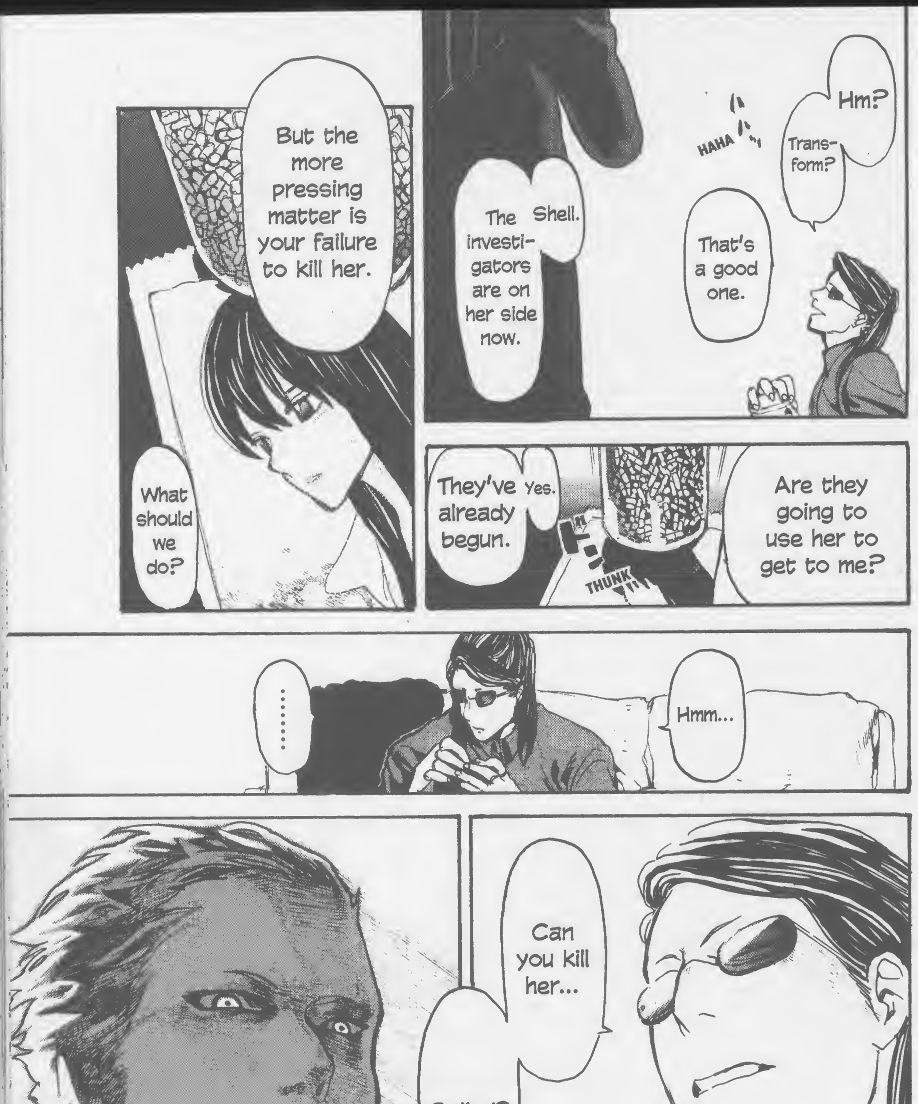


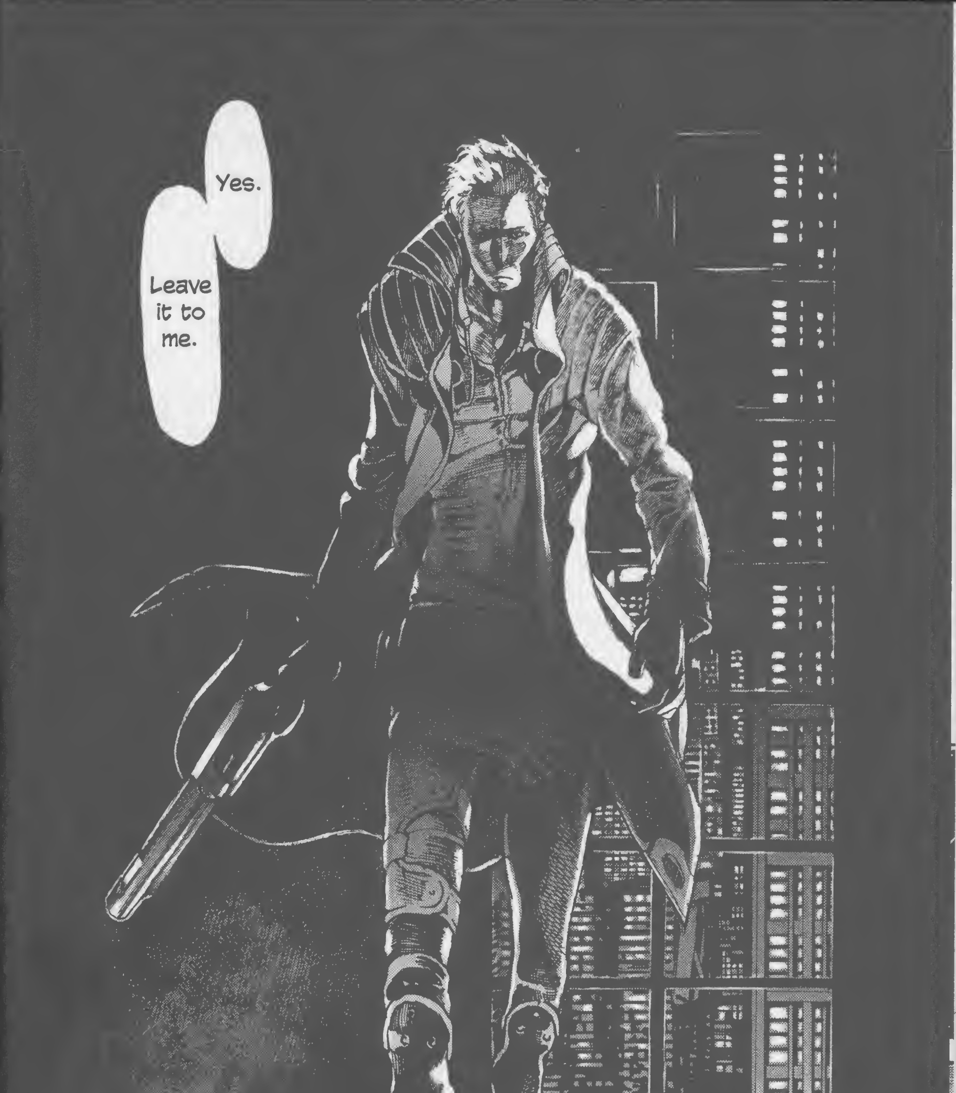

There's...
...no trigger?!
Œuf-coque!
Your heart is broken...
You've been hurt too many times...

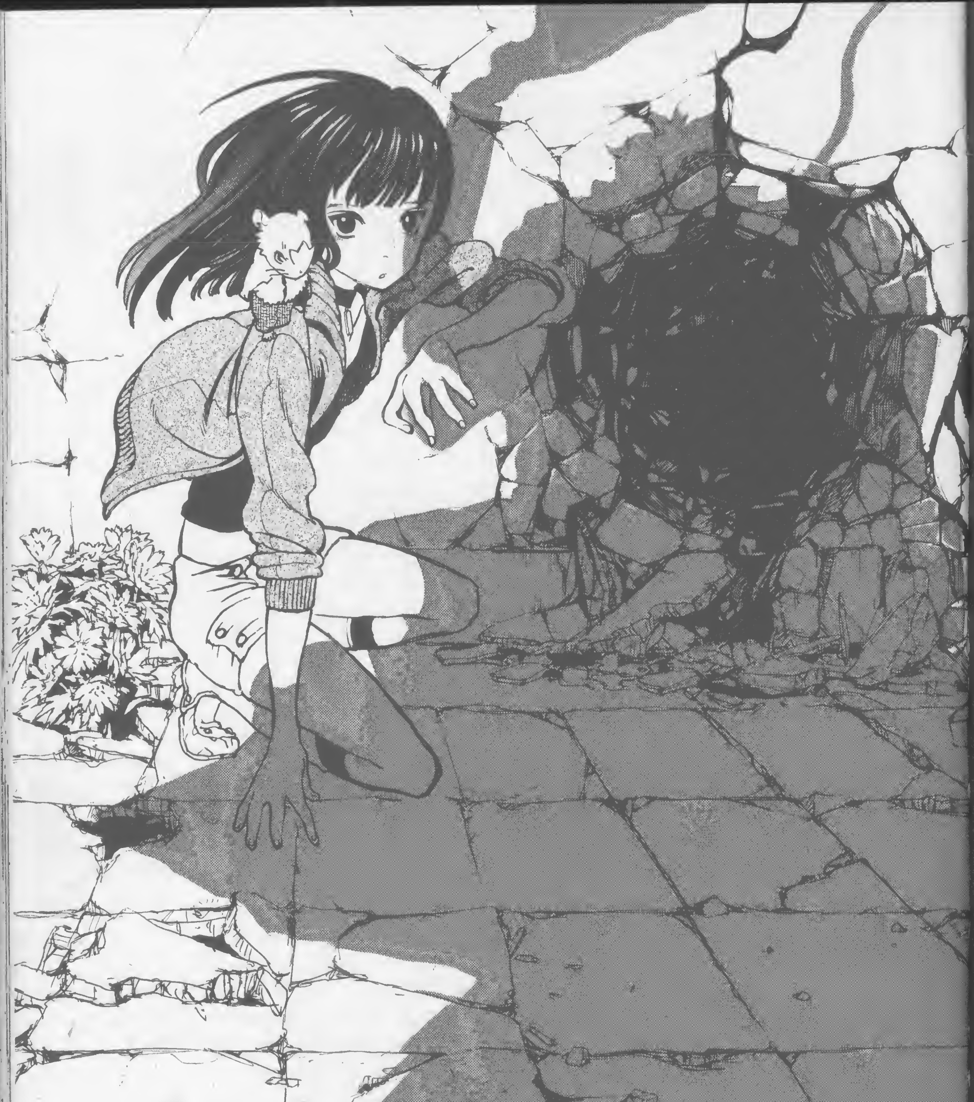

You couldn't find a reason to live before.
But it's not your fault.
We're the ones who saved you.
So now it's our duty to help you find a purpose for your life.
You might have lost everything...
But you're not alone...


Let's find it...
Balot.

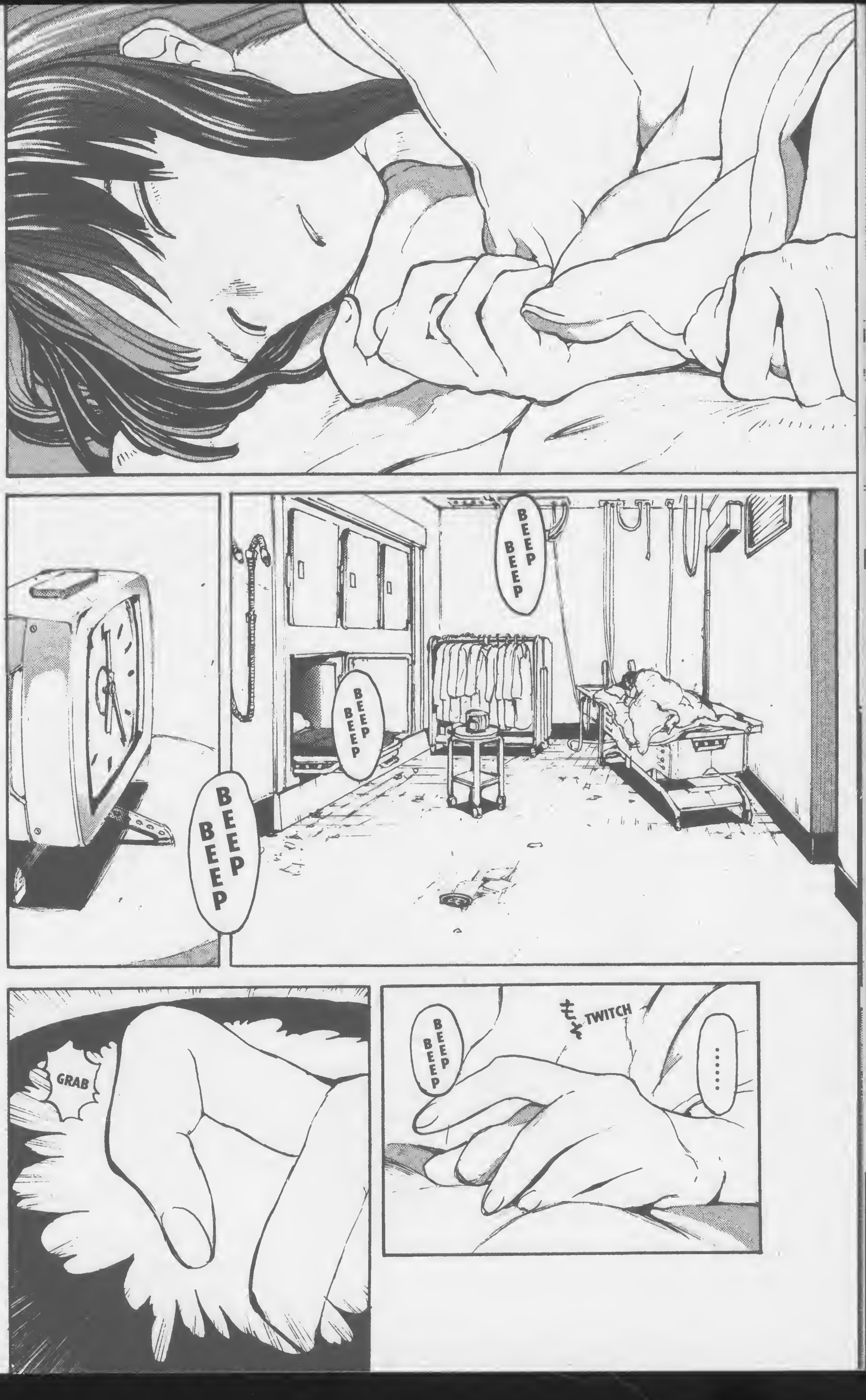

Rune Balot!
What is she...
...the only girl I couldn't kill?
It doesn't make any sense.
That mechanical voice...
...the strange clothes...
...how she wasn't shot...
The man's voice...
That was "Œufcoque."
A detective.
You know him?
Yes.
Very well.
CLENCH
Was he there?
Yes.
He has the power to transform into any object.
He'd be able to appear as anything.

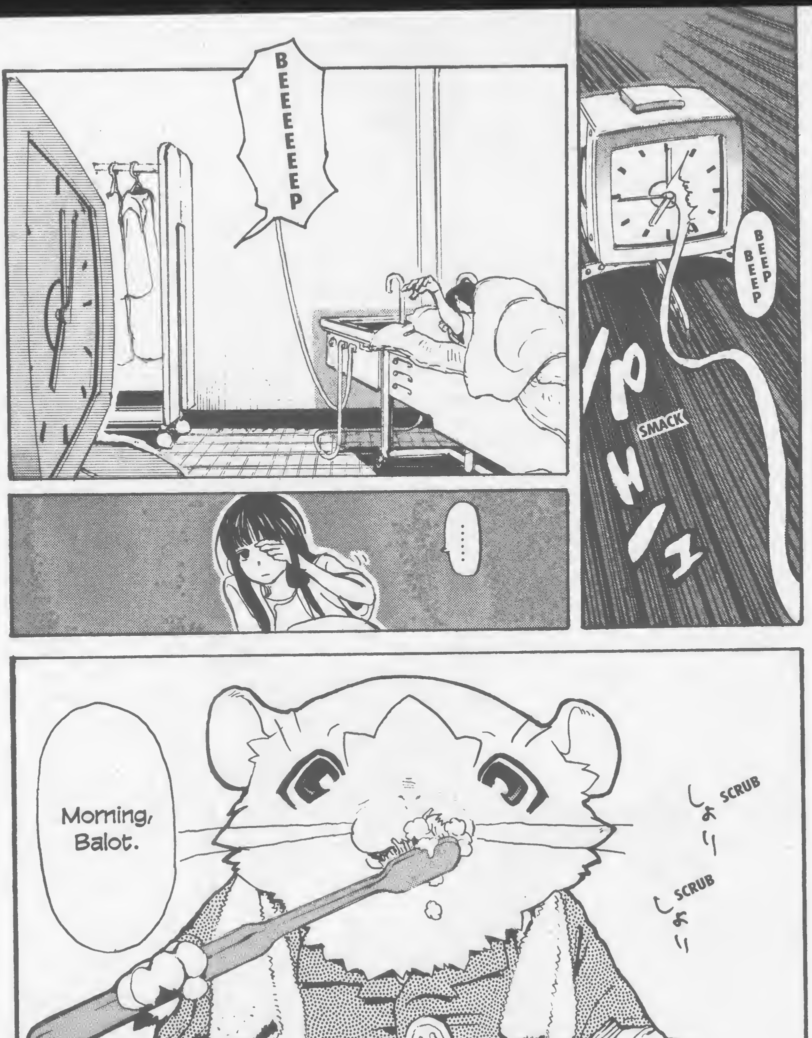

Hm?
HAHA
Transform?
That's a good one.
Shell.
The investigators are on her side now.
Are they going to use her to get to me?
Yes.
They've already begun.
THUNK
But the more pressing matter is your failure to kill her.
What should we do?
Hmm...
......
Can you kill her...
Boiled?

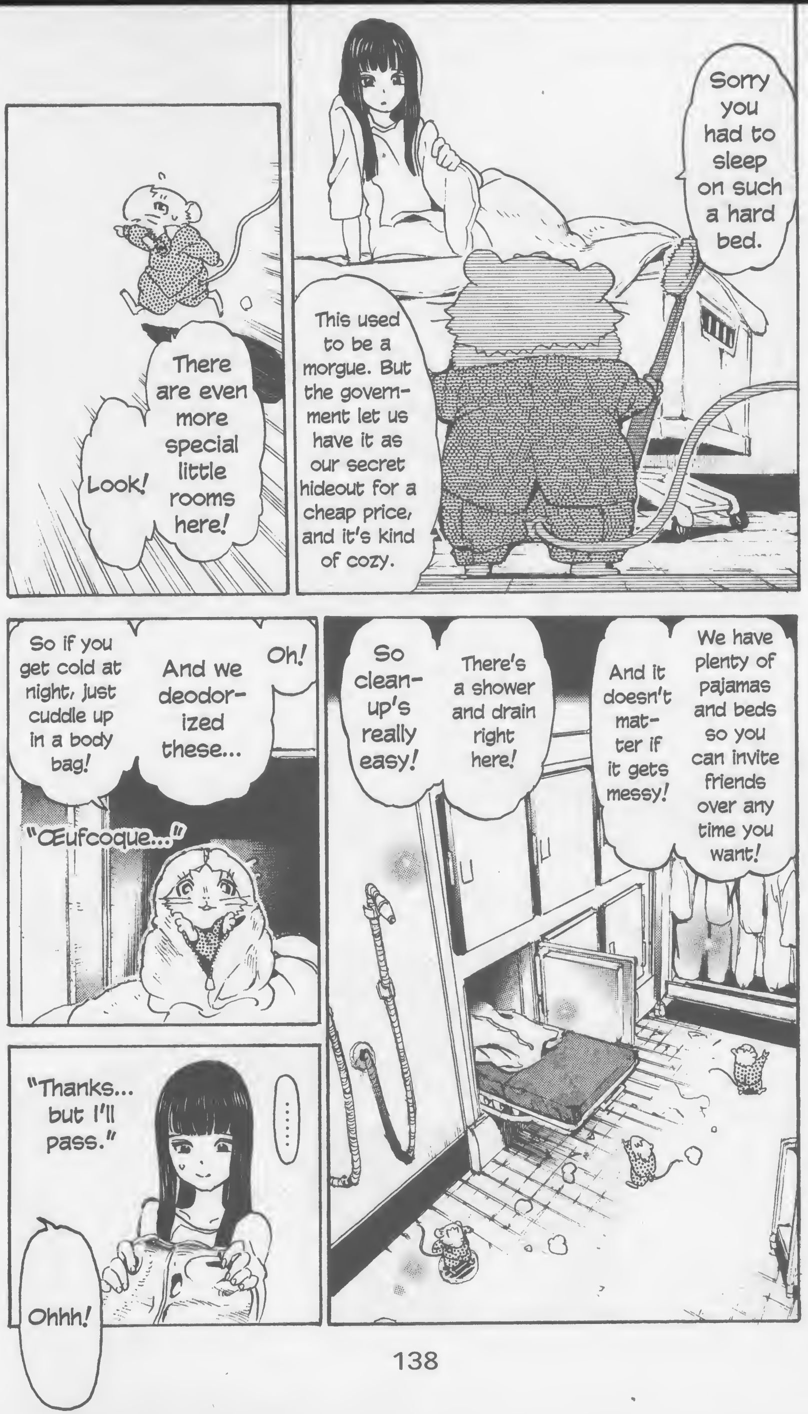

Yes.
Leave it to me.

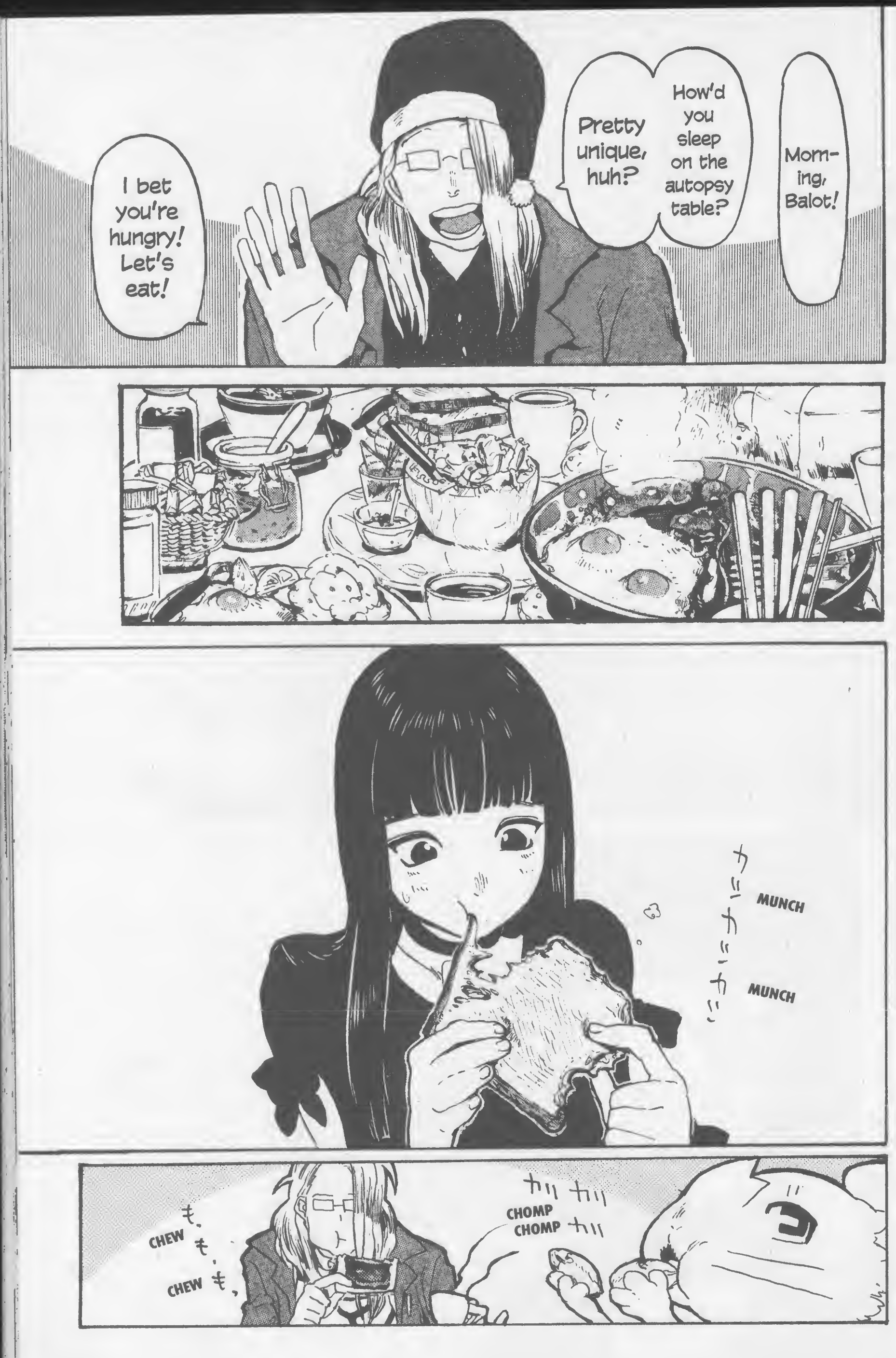

MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

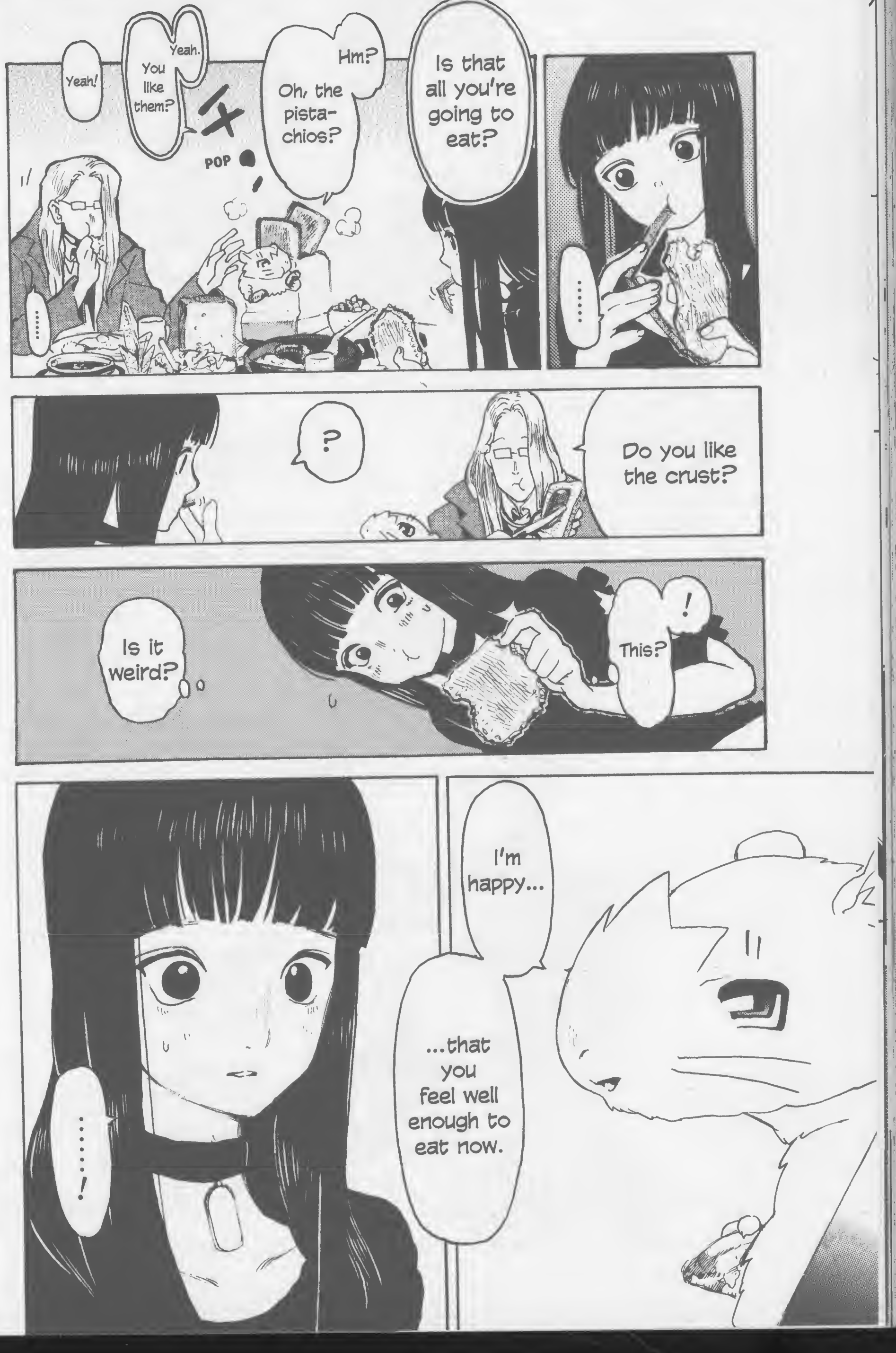
Chapter 3: Mixture (1)

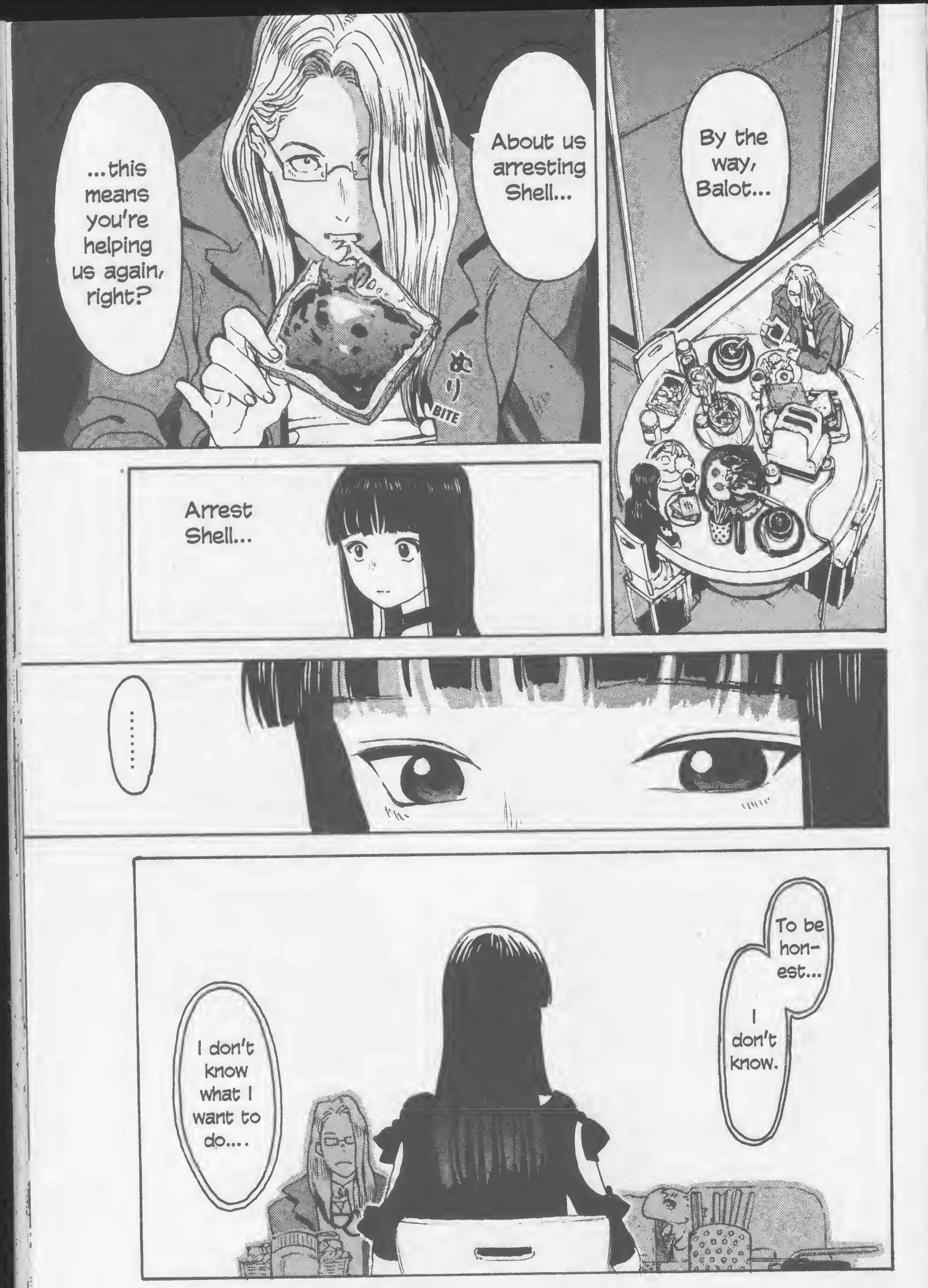

BEEP BEEP
BEEP BEEP
BEEP BEEP
GRAB
もそ TWITCH
BEEP BEEP
……

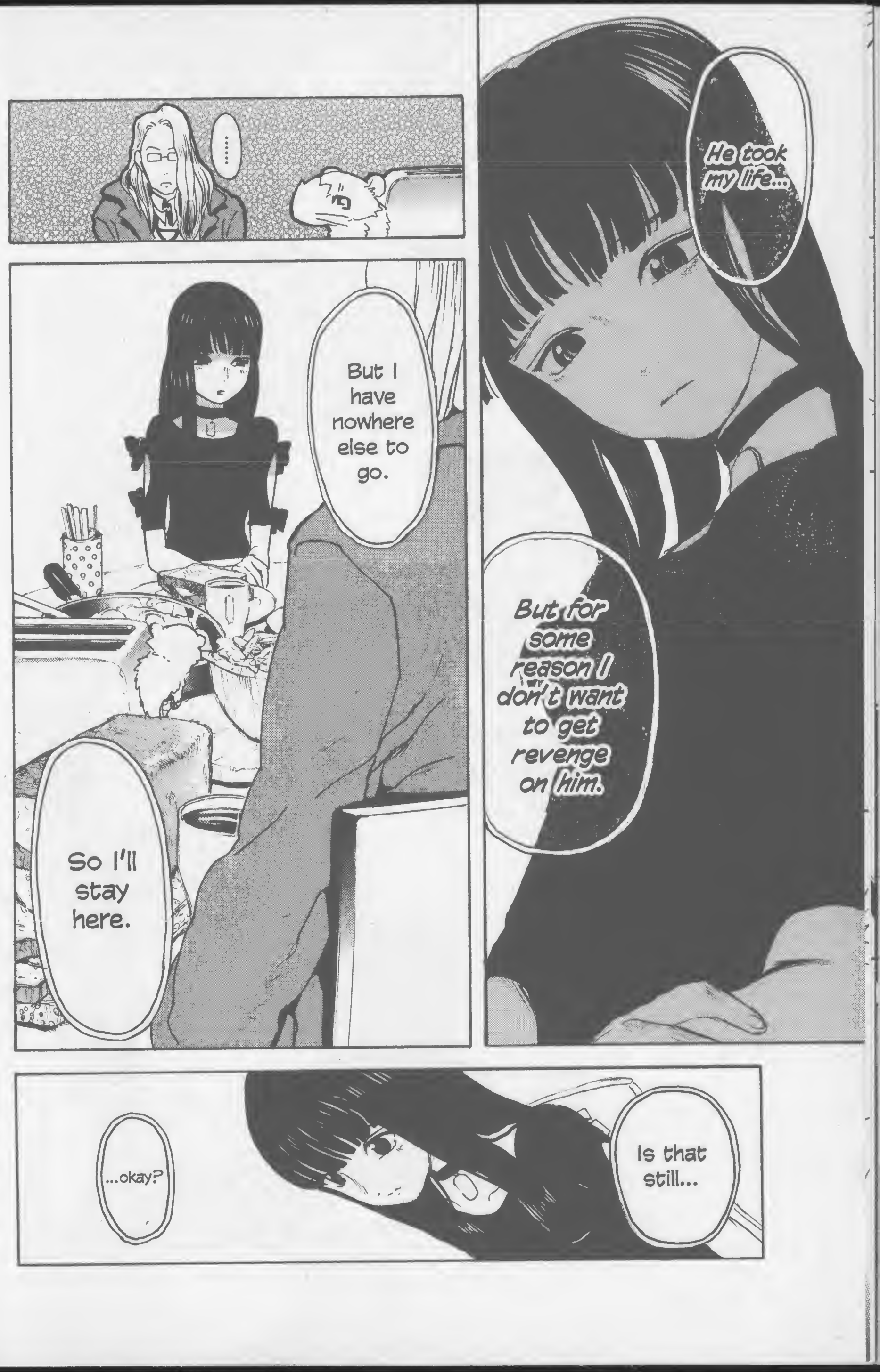

BEEP BEEP
SMACK
BEEEEEEP
……
Morning, Balot.
しょり SCRUB
しょり SCRUB
"Œufcoque…"

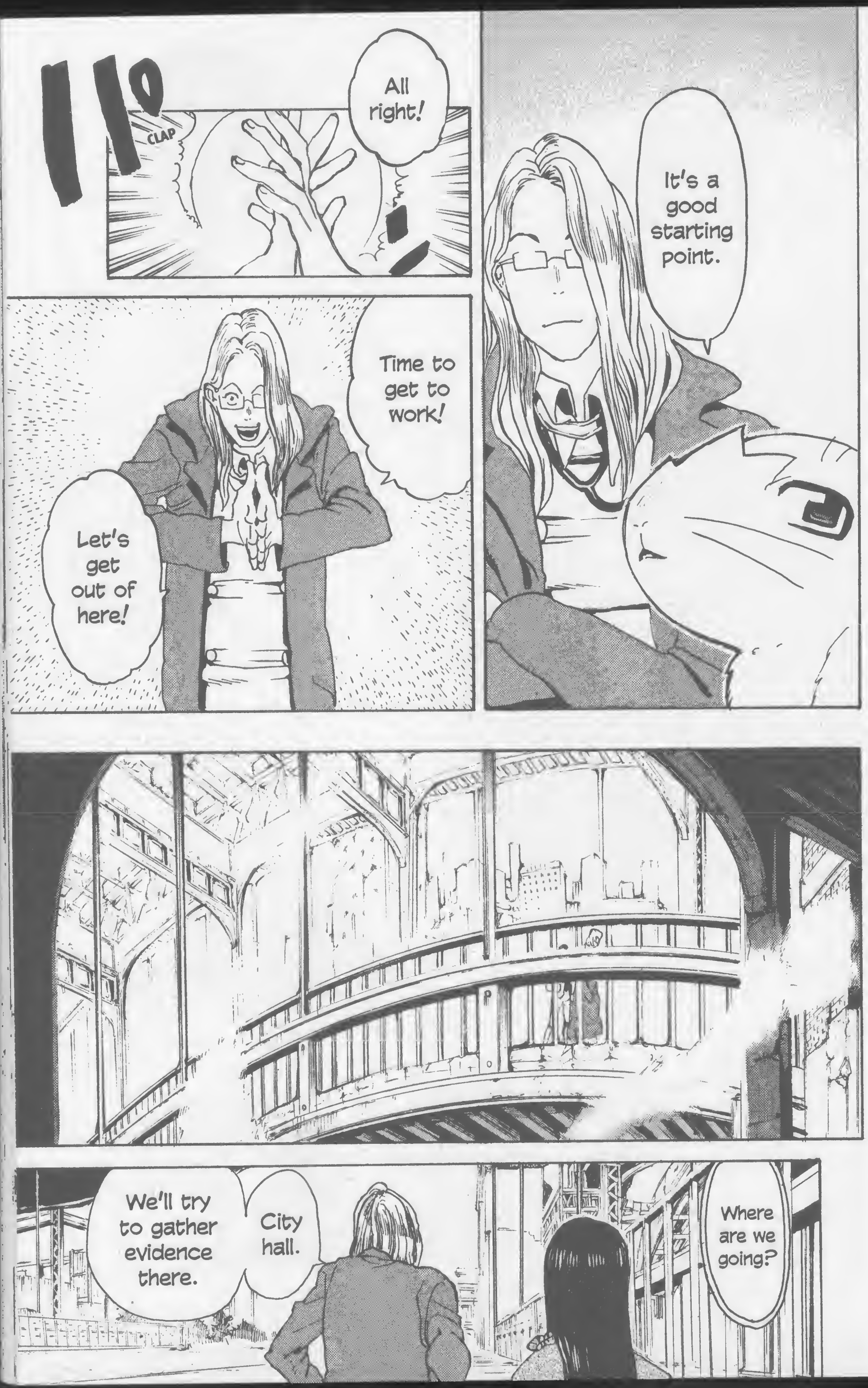

Sorry you had to sleep on such a hard bed.
This used to be a morgue. But the government let us have it as our secret hideout for a cheap price, and it's kind of cozy.
There are even more special little rooms here!
Look!
We have plenty of pajamas and beds so you can invite friends over any time you want!
And it doesn't matter if it gets messy!
There's a shower and drain right here!
So clean-up's really easy!
Oh!
And we deodorized these...
So if you get cold at night, just cuddle up in a body bag!
"Œufcoque..."
......
"Thanks... but I'll pass."
Ohhh!

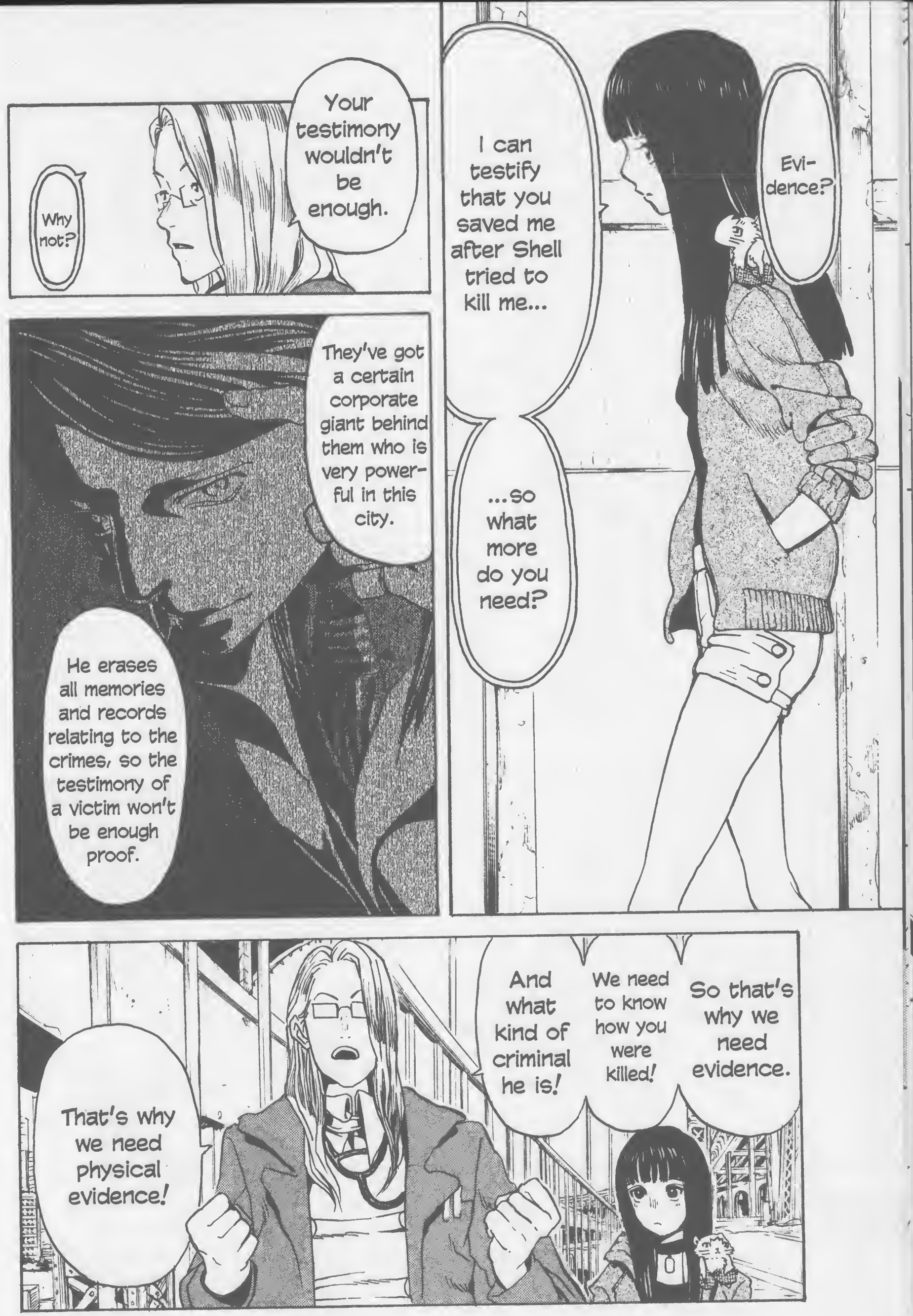

Morning, Balot!
How'd you sleep on the autopsy table?
Pretty unique, huh?
I bet you're hungry! Let's eat!
カリカリカリ
MUNCH
MUNCH
カリ カリ カリ
CHOMP CHOMP
も、も、も、
CHEW CHEW

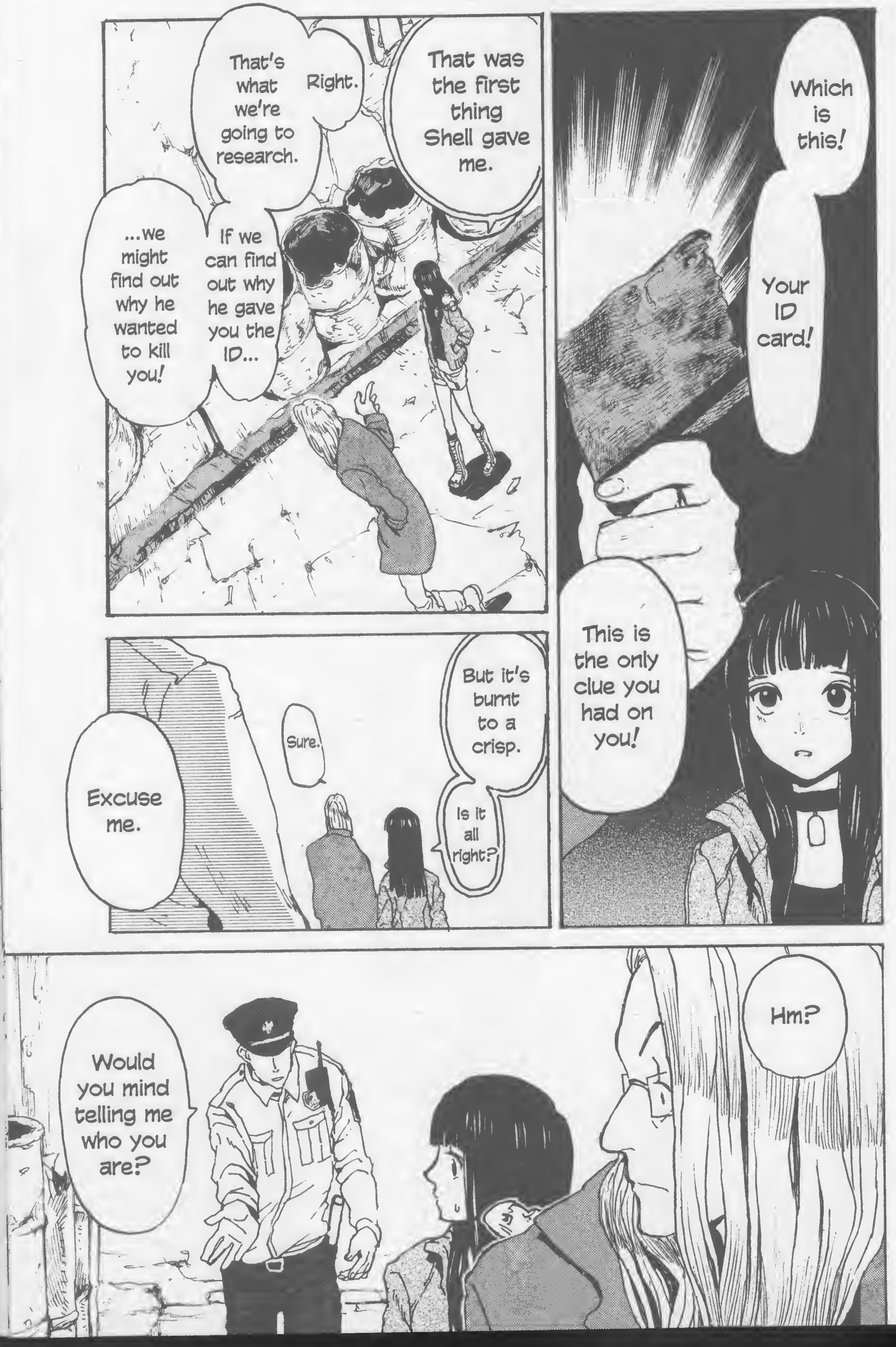

……
Is that all you're going to eat?
Hm? Oh, the pistachios?
Yeah.
You like them?
Yeah!
POP
……
Do you like the crust?
?
!
This?
Is it weird?
I'm happy...
...that you feel well enough to eat now.
……!

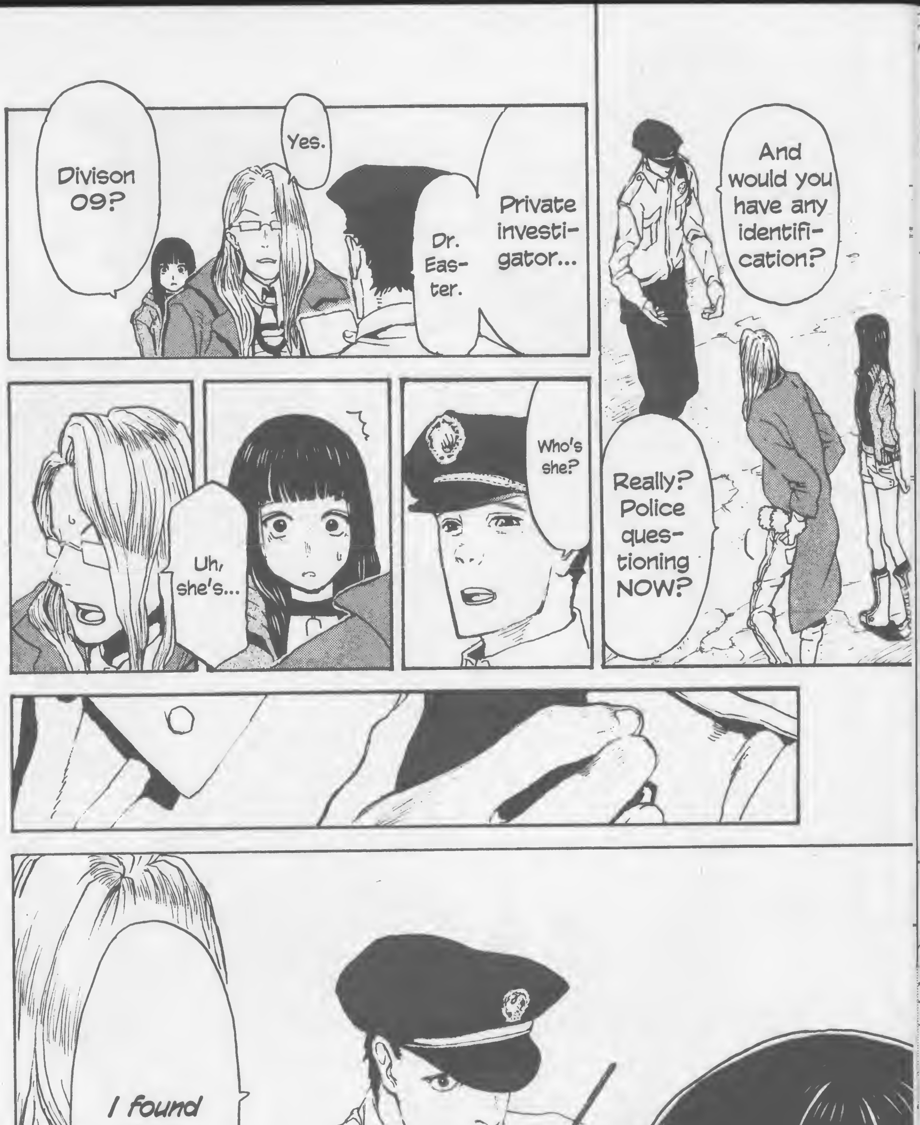

By the way, Balot...
About us arresting Shell...
...this means you're helping us again, right?
BITE
Arrest Shell...
……
To be honest...
I don't know.
I don't know what I want to do....

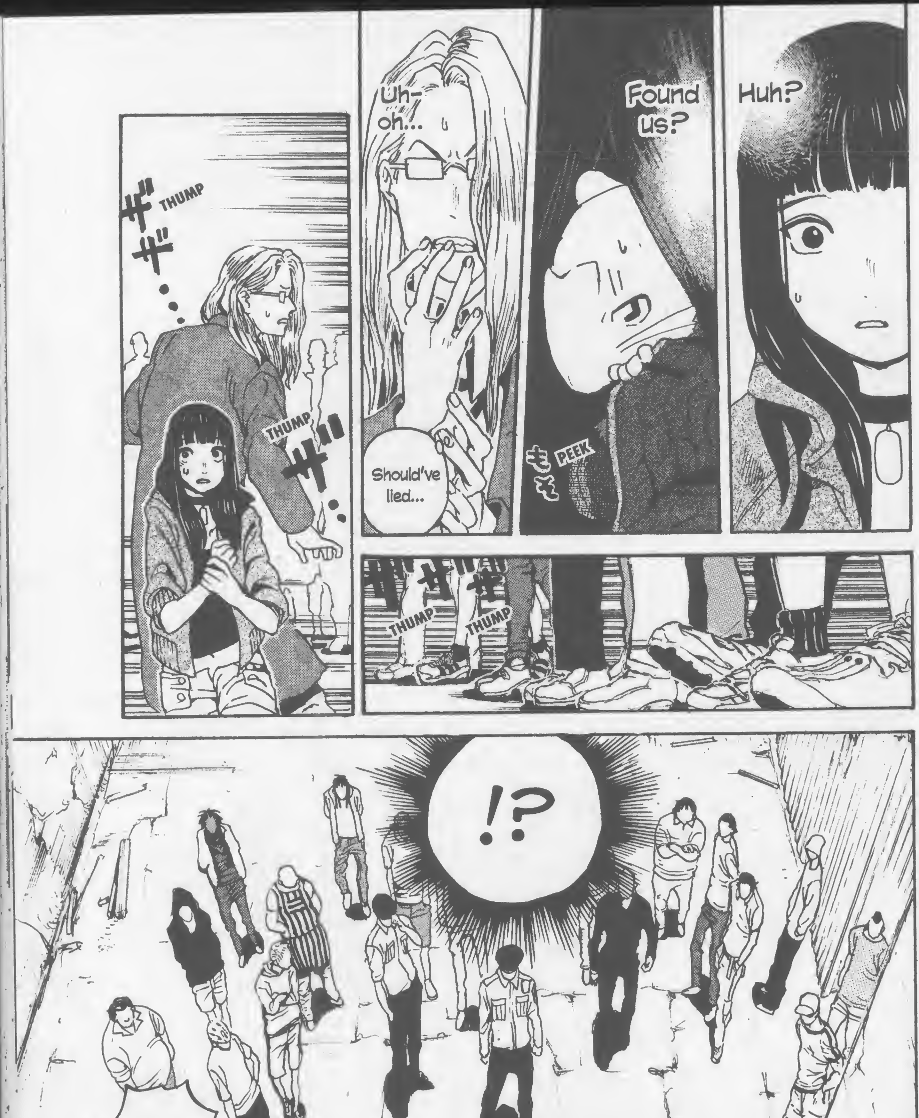

He took my life...
But for some reason I don't want to get revenge on him.
……
But I have nowhere else to go.
So I'll stay here.
Is that still...
...okay?

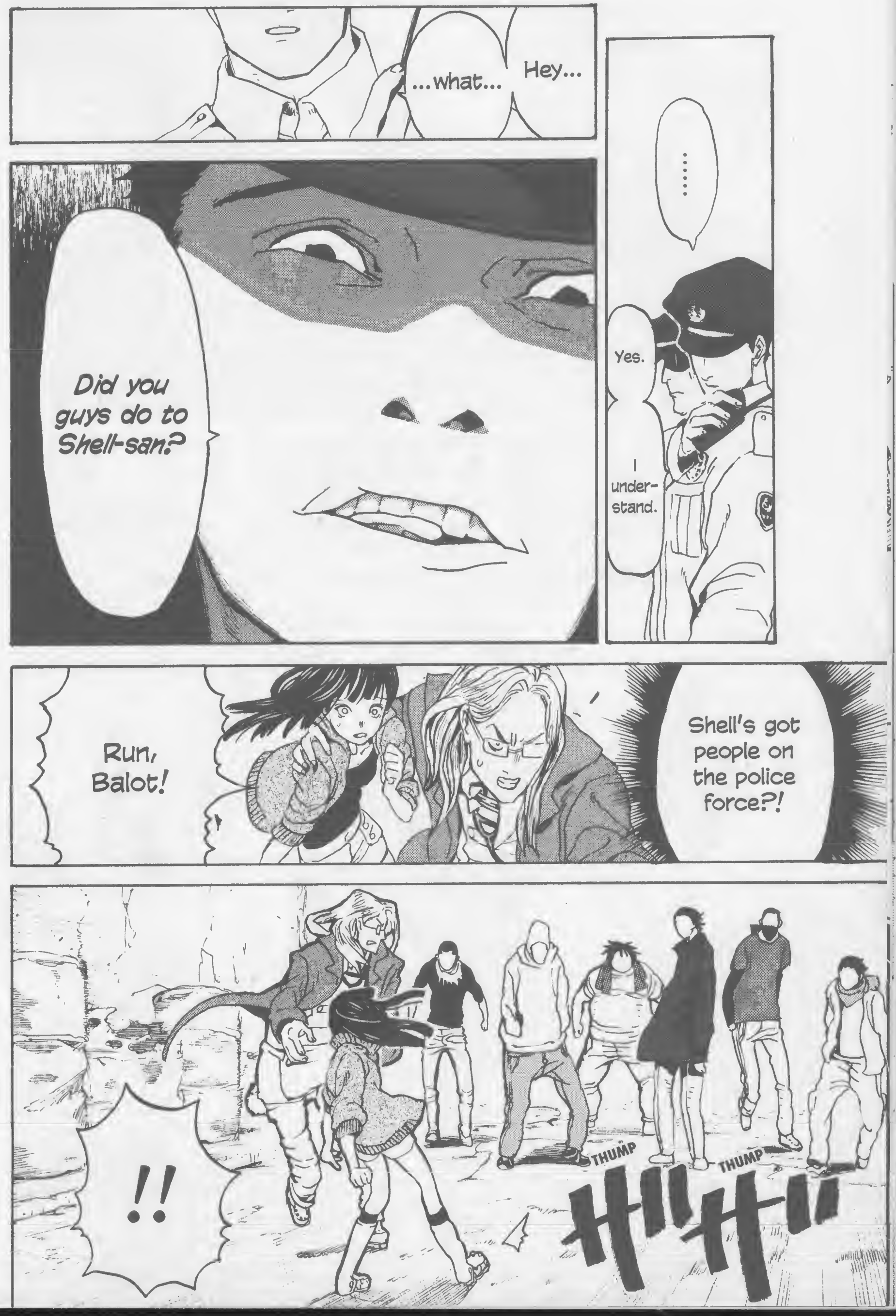

It's a good starting point.
All right!
CLAP
Time to get to work!
Let's get out of here!
Where are we going?
City hall.
We'll try to gather evidence there.

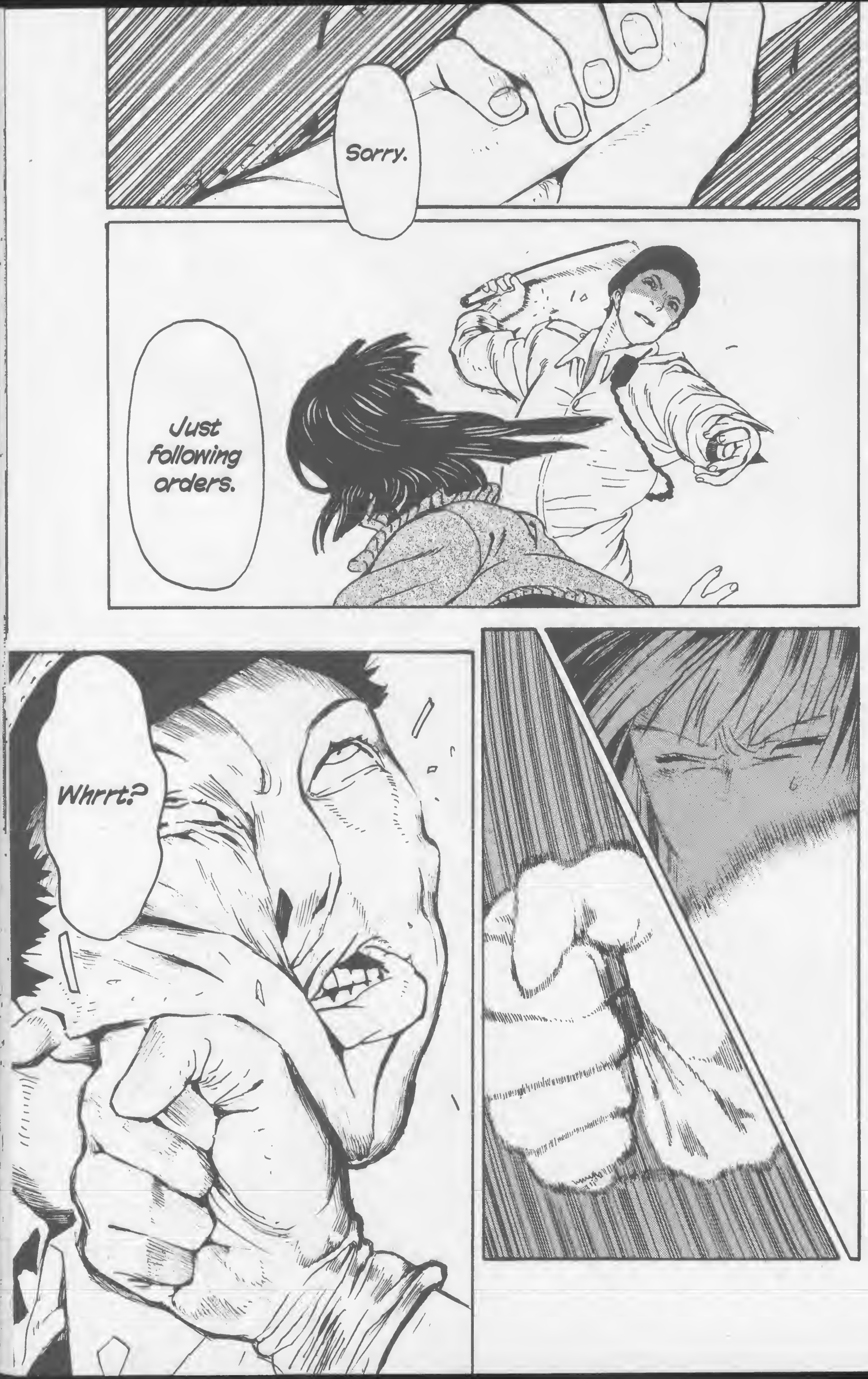

Evi-dence?
I can testify that you saved me after Shell tried to kill me...
...so what more do you need?
Your testimony wouldn't be enough.
Why not?
They've got a certain corporate giant behind them who is very power-ful in this city.
He erases all memories and records relating to the crimes, so the testimony of a victim won't be enough proof.
So that's why we need evidence.
We need to know how you were killed!
And what kind of criminal he is!
That's why we need physical evidence!

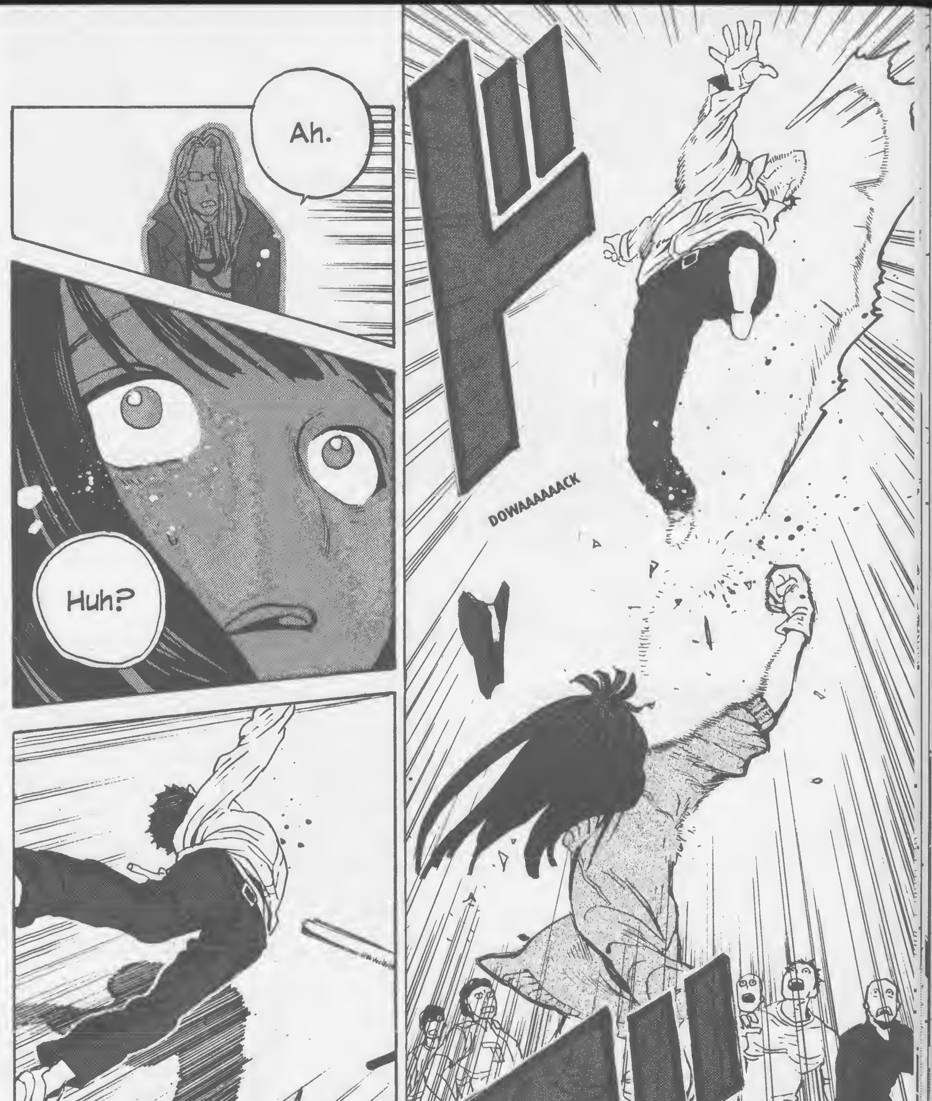

Which is this!
Your ID card!
This is the only clue you had on you!
That was the first thing Shell gave me.
Right.
That's what we're going to research.
If we can find out why he gave you the ID...
...we might find out why he wanted to kill you!
But it's burnt to a crisp.
Is it all right?
Sure.
Excuse me.
Hm?
Would you mind telling me who you are?

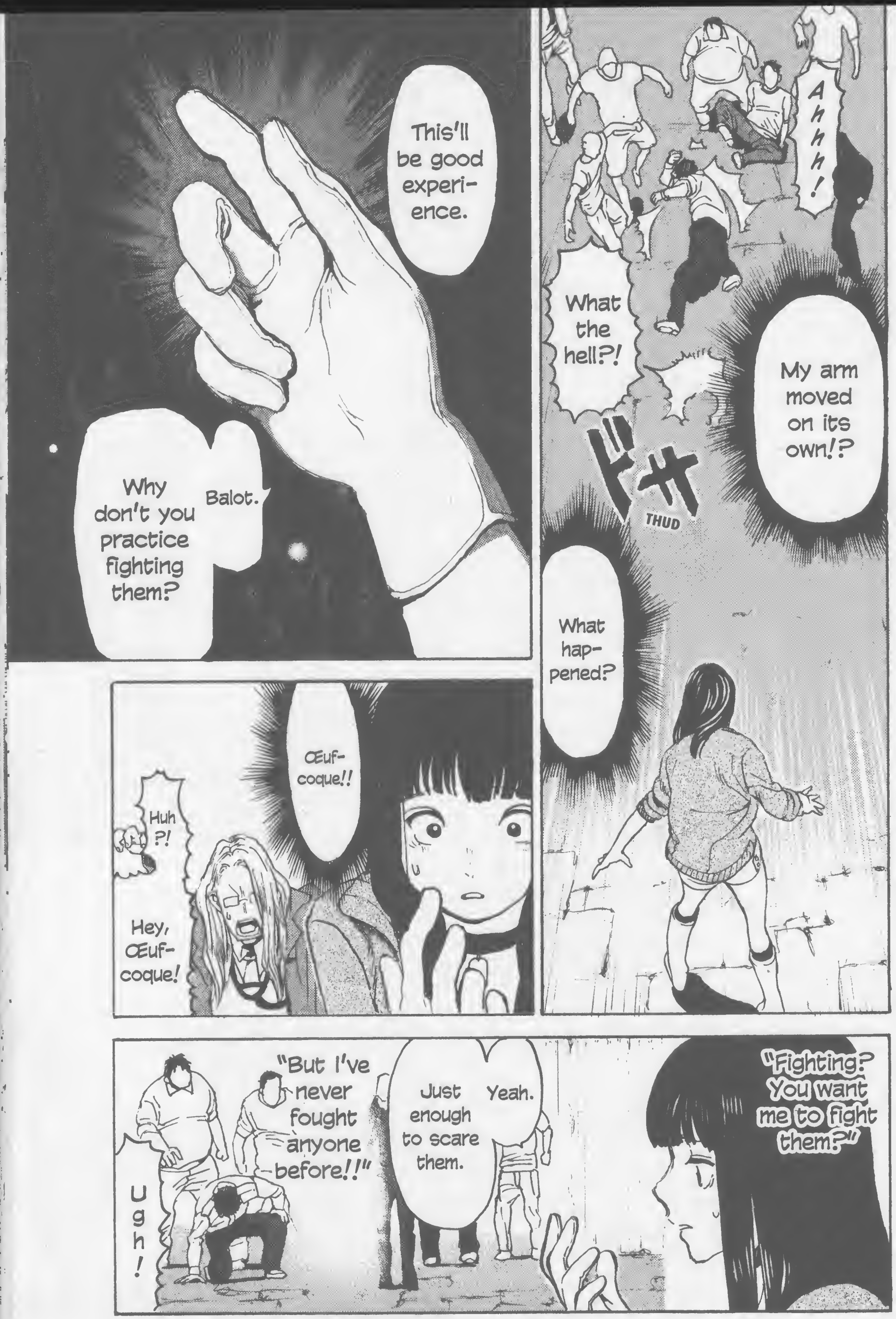

And would you have any identification?
Private investigator... Dr. Easter.
Yes.
Divison 09?
Really? Police questioning NOW?
Who's she?
Uh, she's...
I found them.

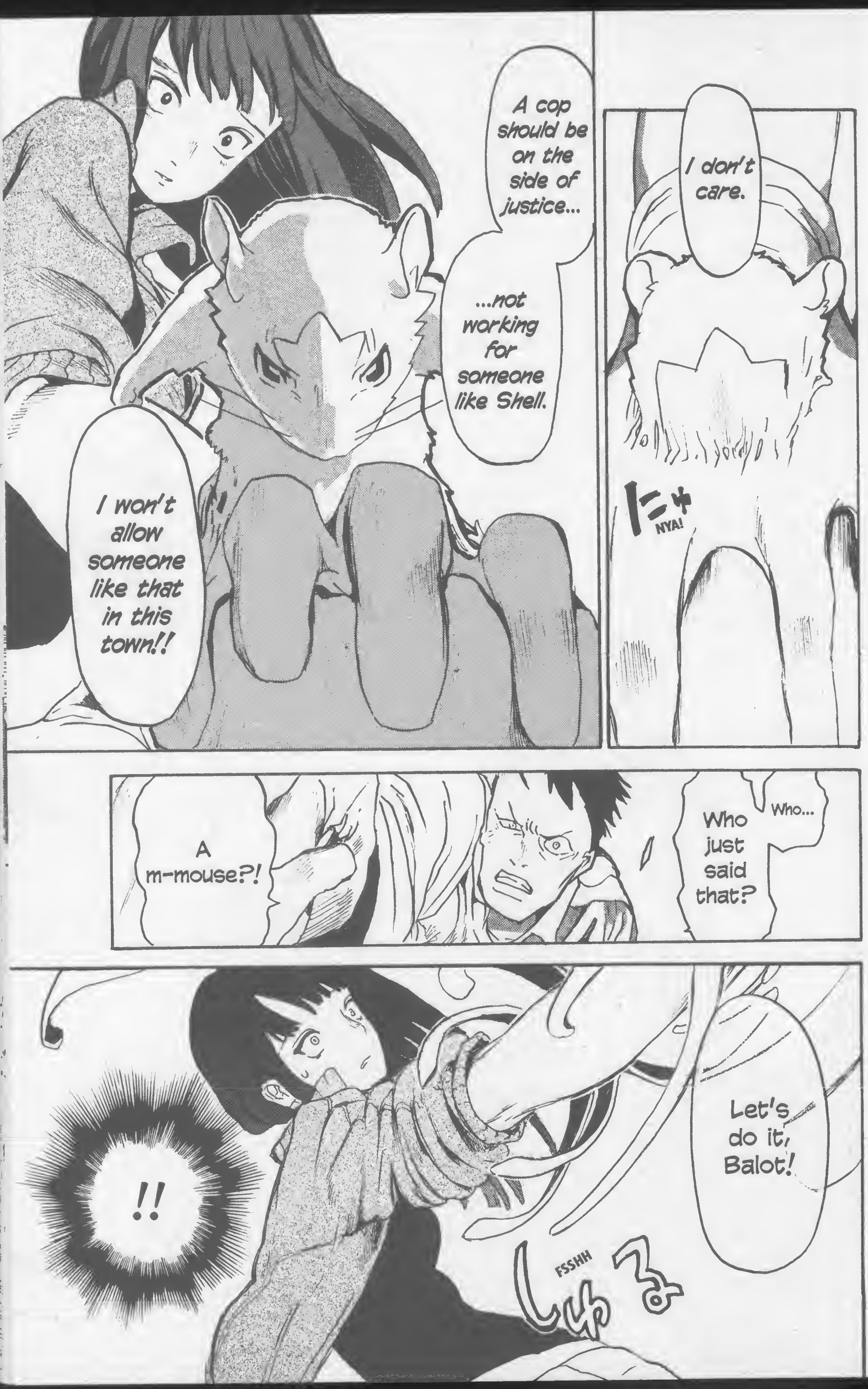

Huh?
Found us?
もそ PEEK
Uh-oh...
Should've lied...
ザ THUMP
ザ
ザ THUMP
ザ
THUMP
THUMP
!?
Who are you people?

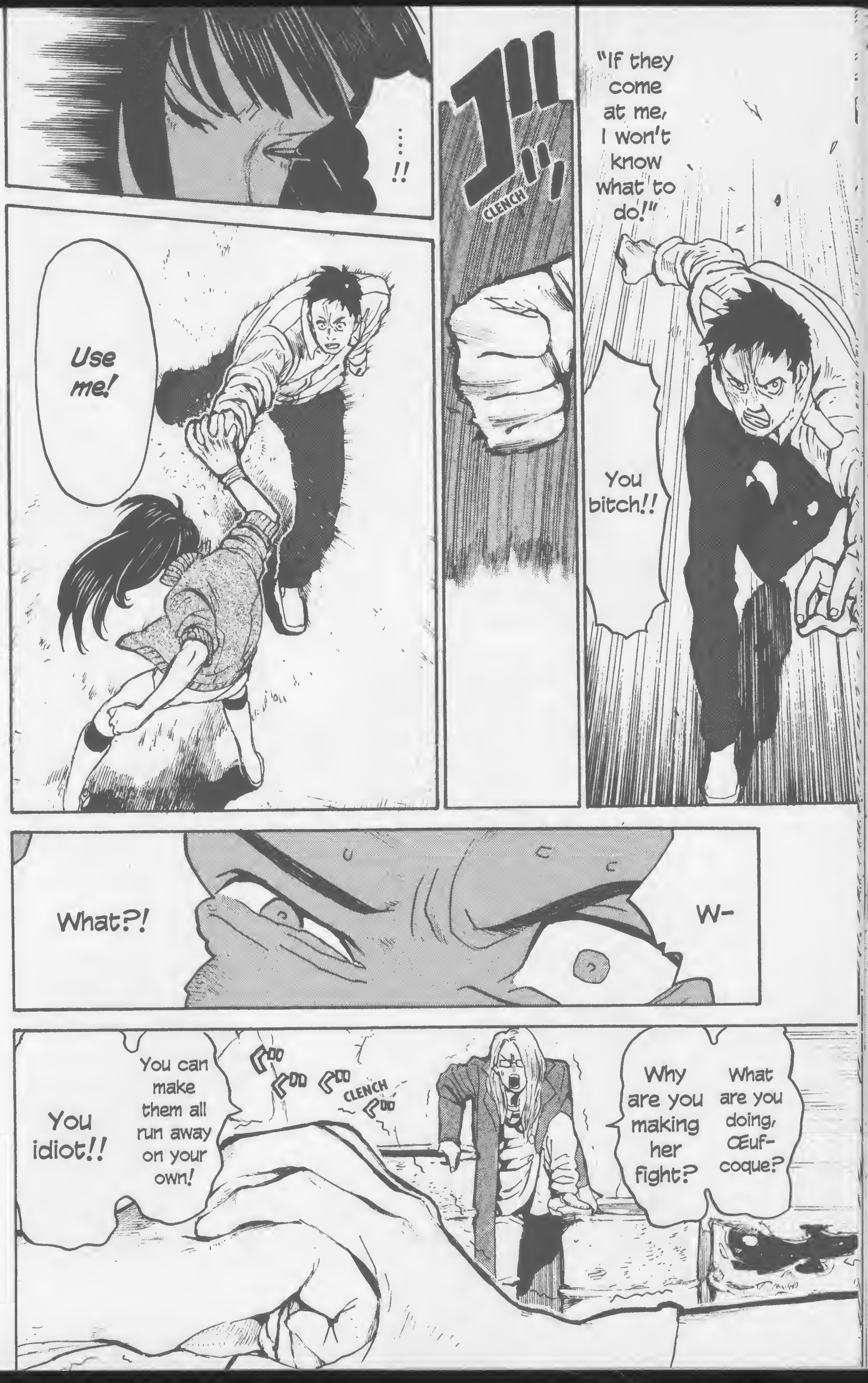

Hey...
...what...
......
Did you guys do to Shell-san?
Yes.
I understand.
Shell's got people on the police force?!
Run, Balot!
THUMP
THUMP
!!

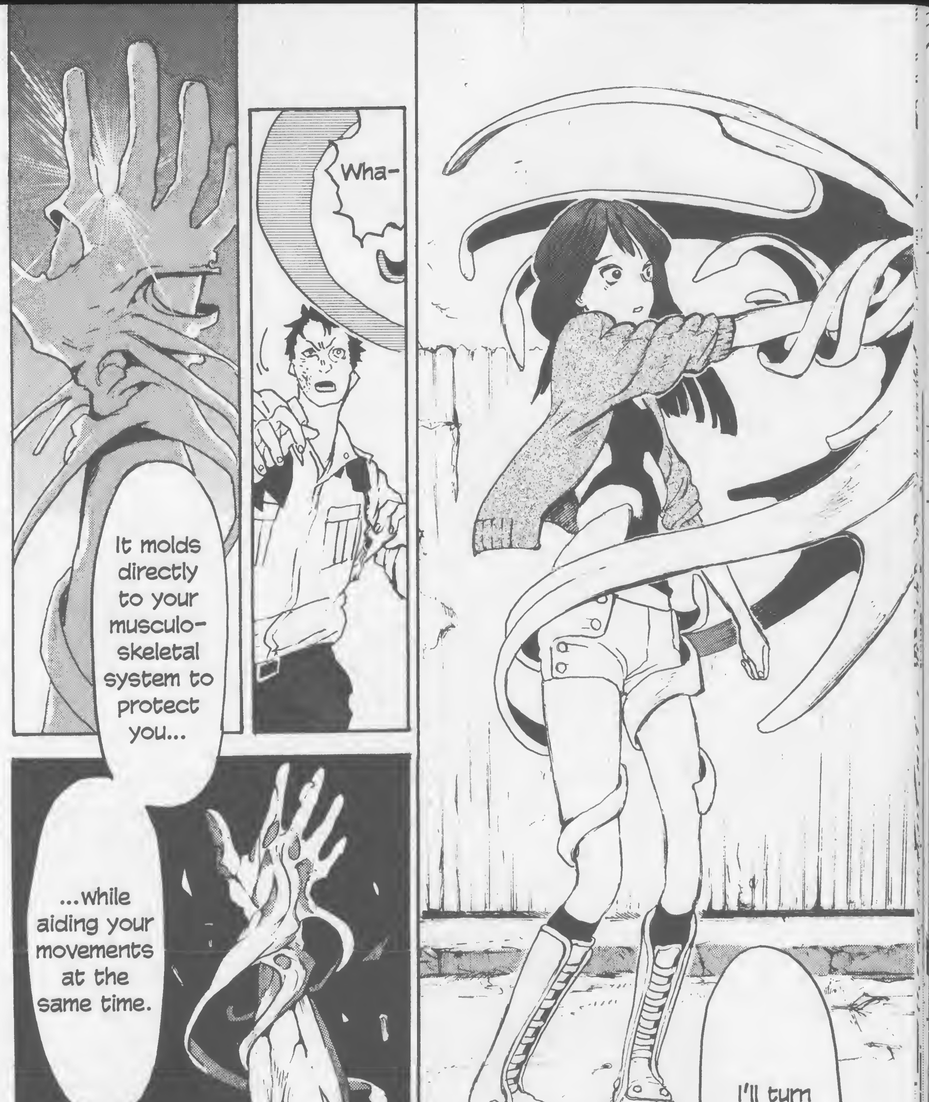

Sorry.
Just following orders.
Whrrt?

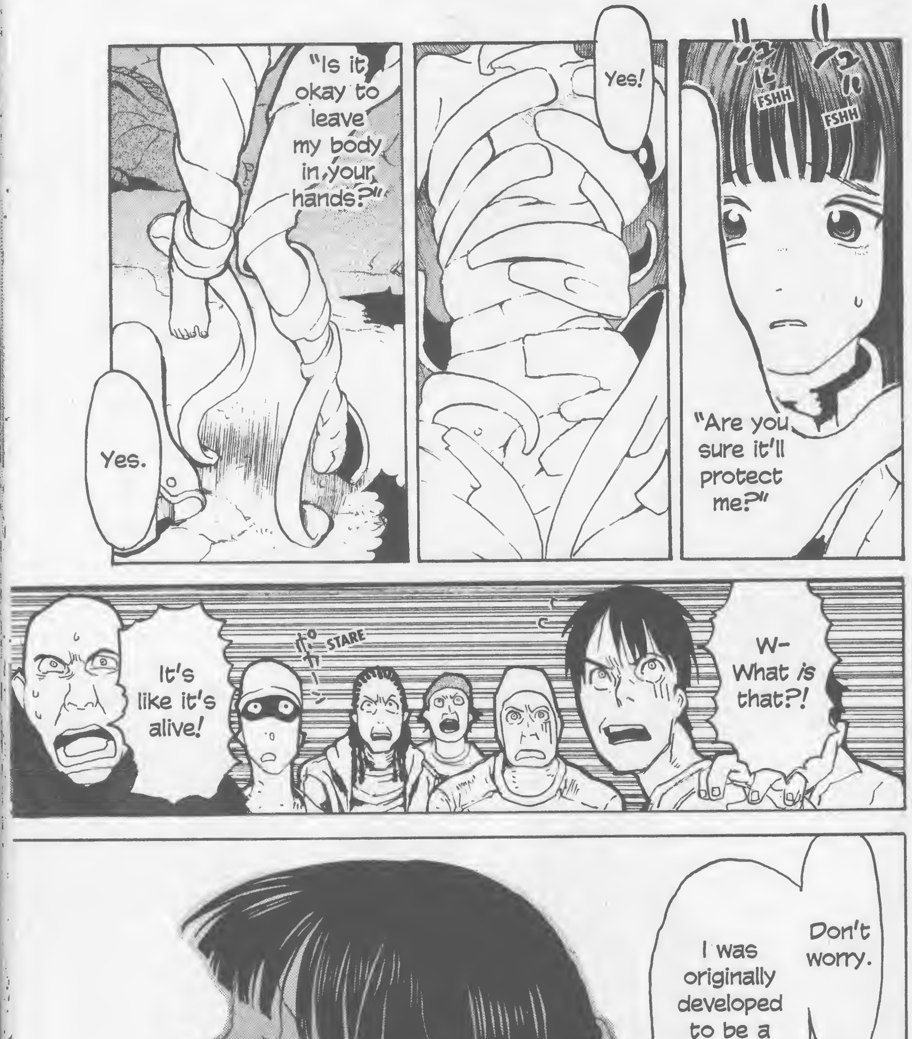

Ah.
Huh?
THUD
DOWAAAAAACK

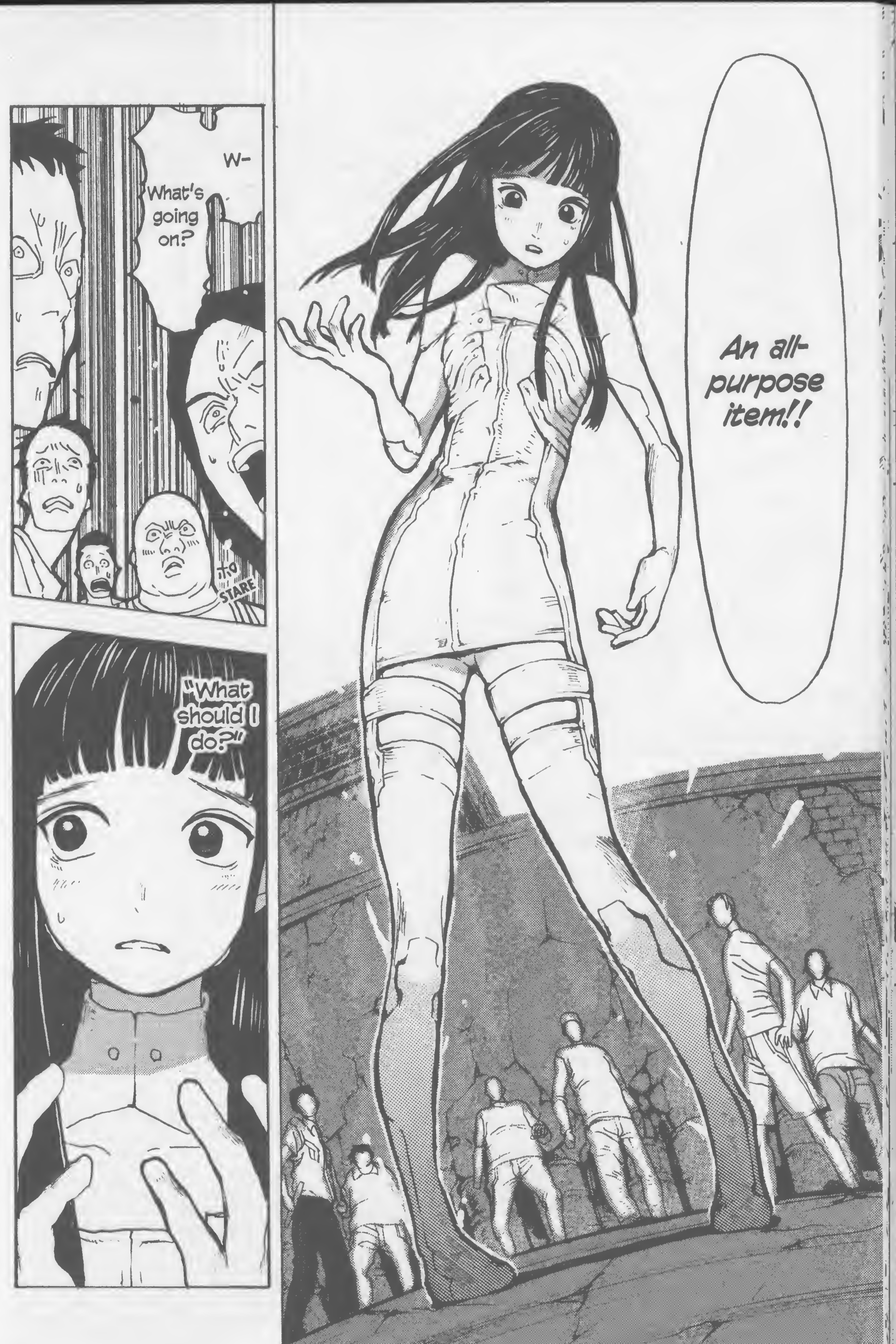

Ahhh!
What the hell?!
My arm moved on its own!?
THUD
What happened?
Balot.
Why don't you practice fighting them?
This'll be good experience.
Œuf-coque!!
Huh?!
Hey, Œuf-coque!
"Fighting? You want me to fight them?"
Yeah.
Just enough to scare them.
"But I've never fought anyone before!!"
Ugh!

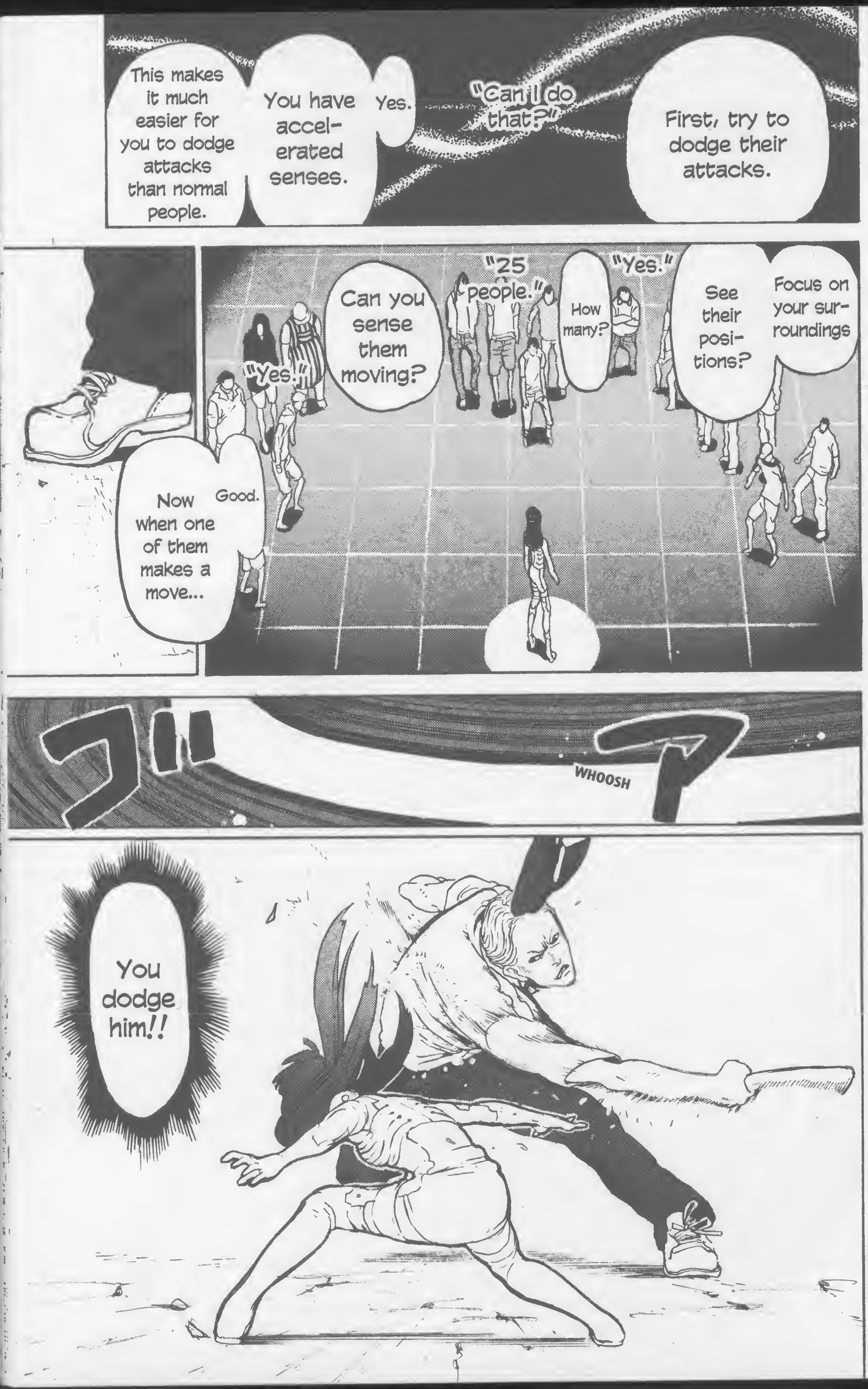

I don't care.
にゃ NYA!
A cop should be on the side of justice...
...not working for someone like Shell.
I won't allow someone like that in this town!!
Who...
Who just said that?
A m-mouse?!
Let's do it, Balot!
!!
しゅる FSSHH

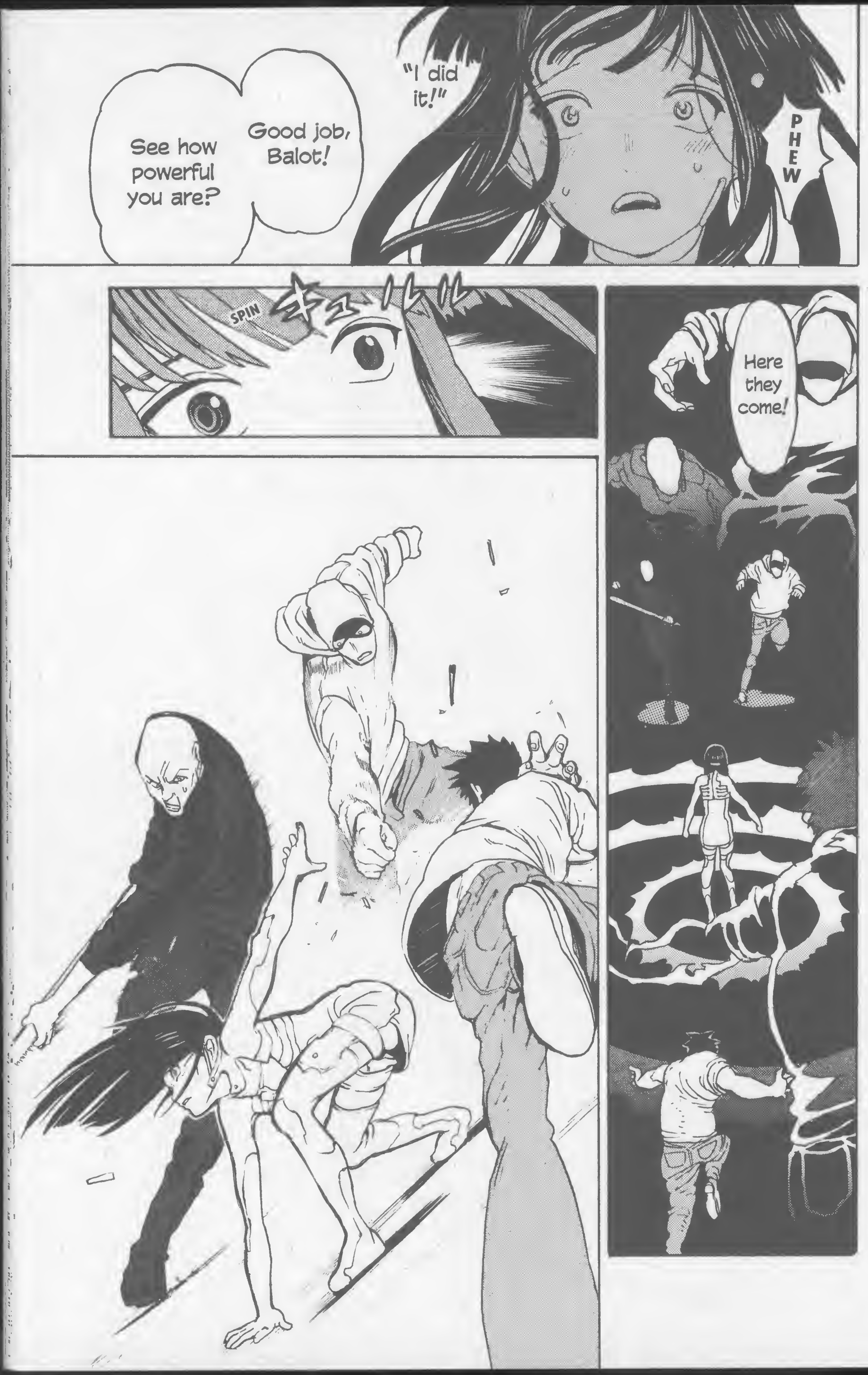

"If they come at me, I won't know what to do!"
You bitch!!
ゴッ CLENCH
...!!
Use me!
W-
What?!
What are you doing, Œuf-coque?
Why are you making her fight?
CLENCH
You can make them all run away on your own!
You idiot!!

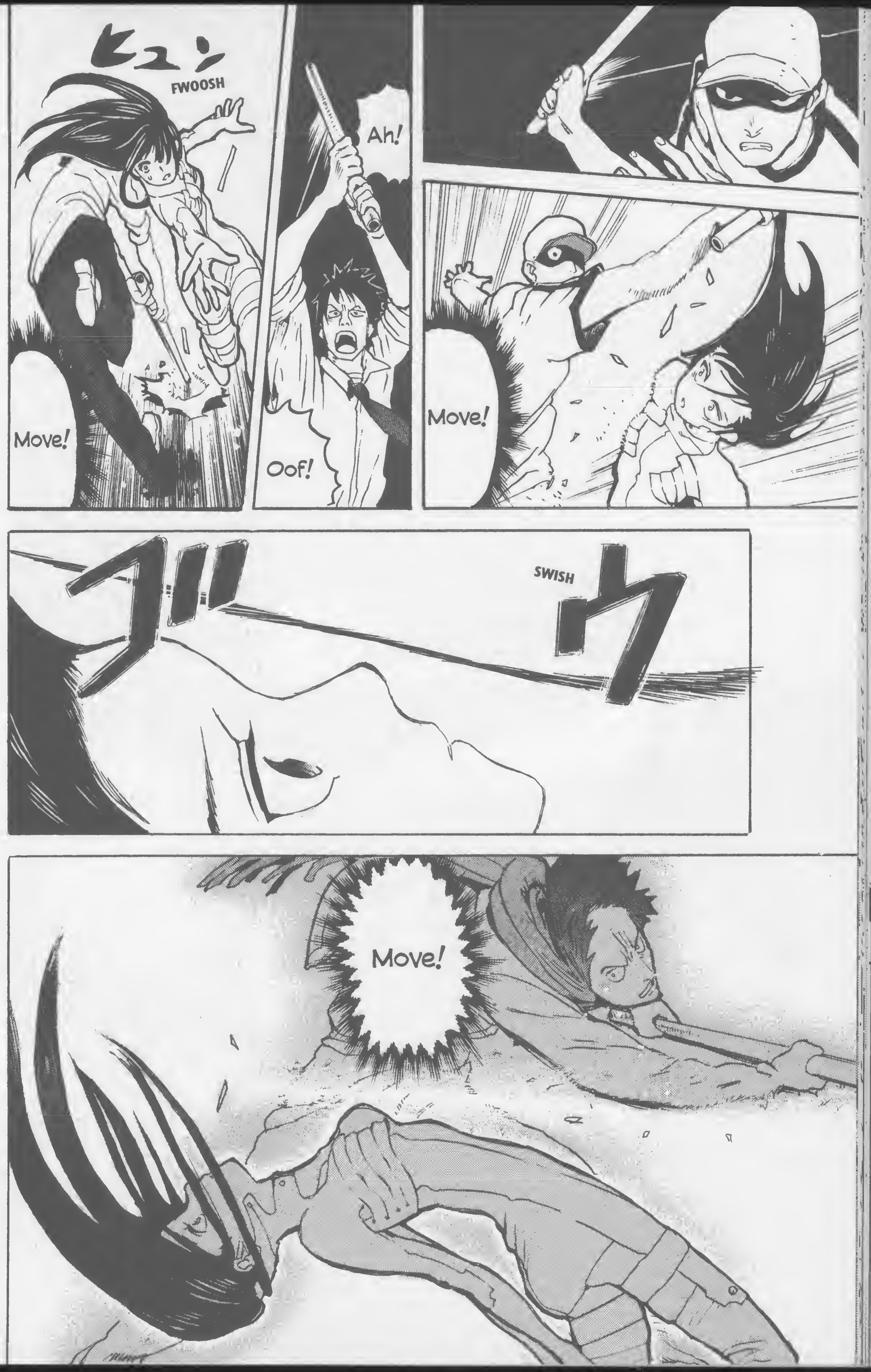

I'll turn into a protective suit for you!
Wha-
It molds directly to your musculo-skeletal system to protect you...
...while aiding your movements at the same time.

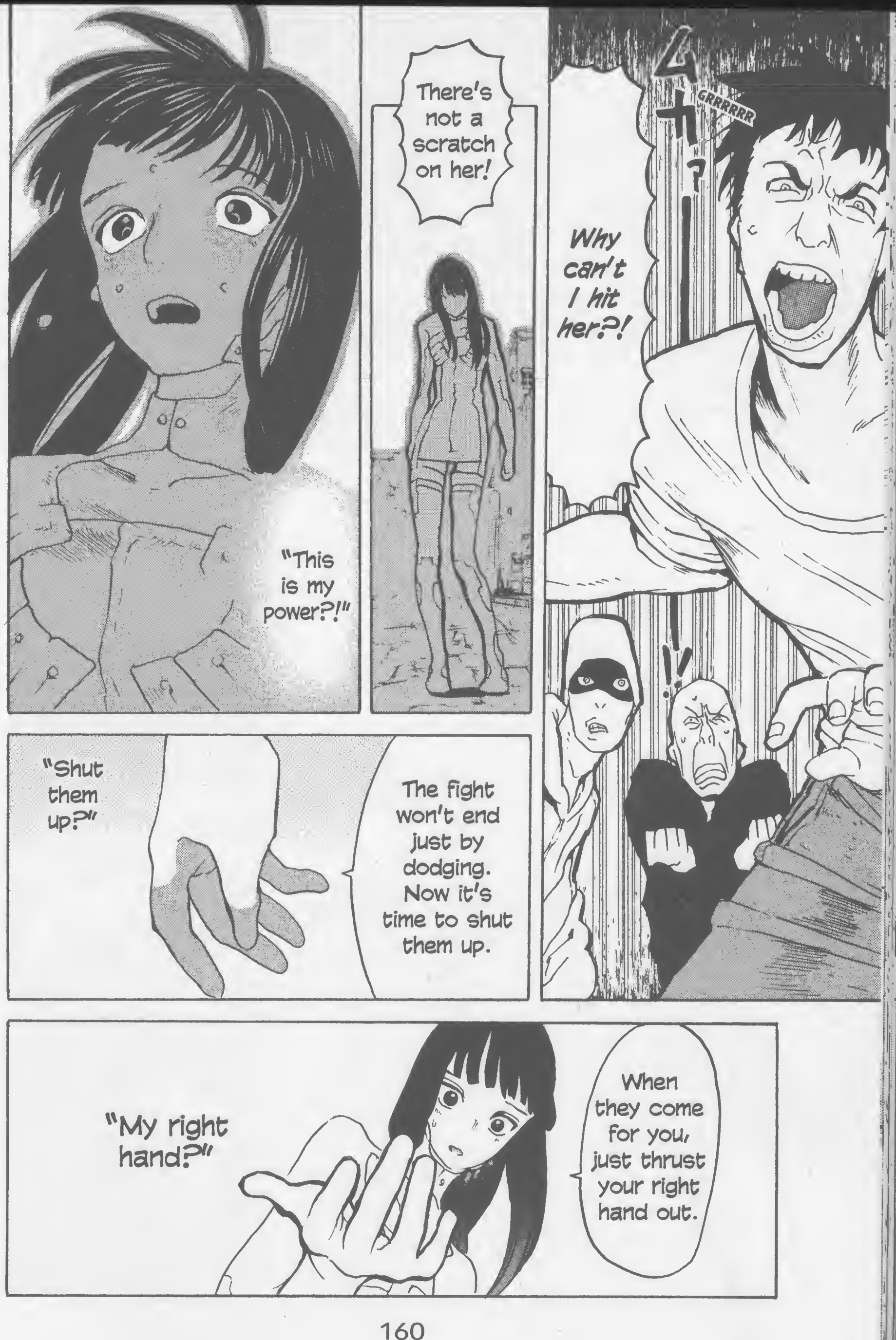

FSHH
FSHH
"Are you sure it'll protect me?"
Yes!
"Is it okay to leave my body in your hands?"
Yes.
W- What *is* that?!
STARE
It's like it's alive!
Don't worry.
I was originally developed to be a combat weapon.

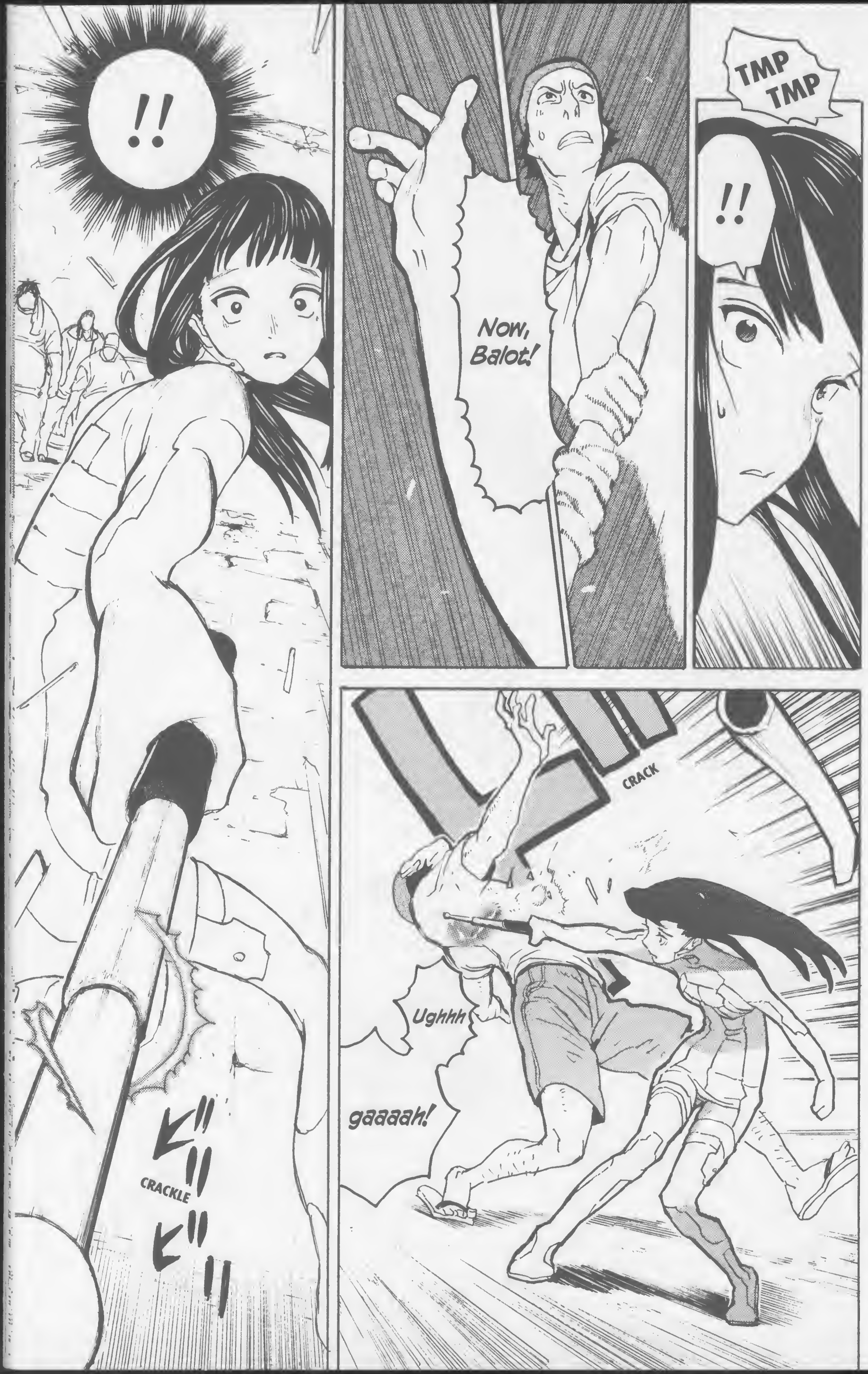

An all-purpose item!!
W-
What's going on?
STARE
"What should I do?"

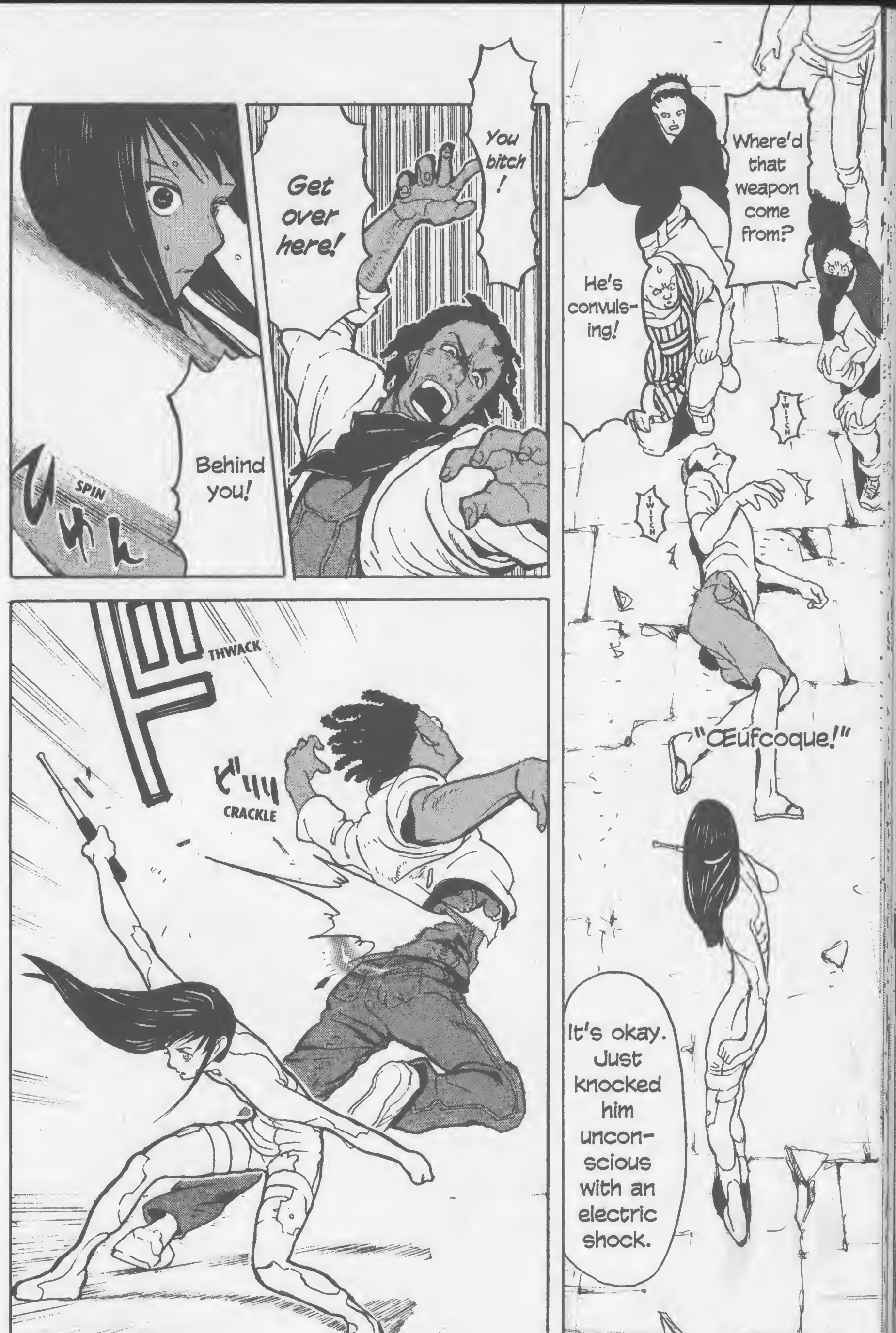

First, try to dodge their attacks.
"Can I do that?"
Yes.
You have accelerated senses.
This makes it much easier for you to dodge attacks than normal people.
Focus on your surroundings
See their positions?
"Yes."
How many?
"25 people."
Can you sense them moving?
"Yes."
Good.
Now when one of them makes a move...
WHOOSH
You dodge him!!

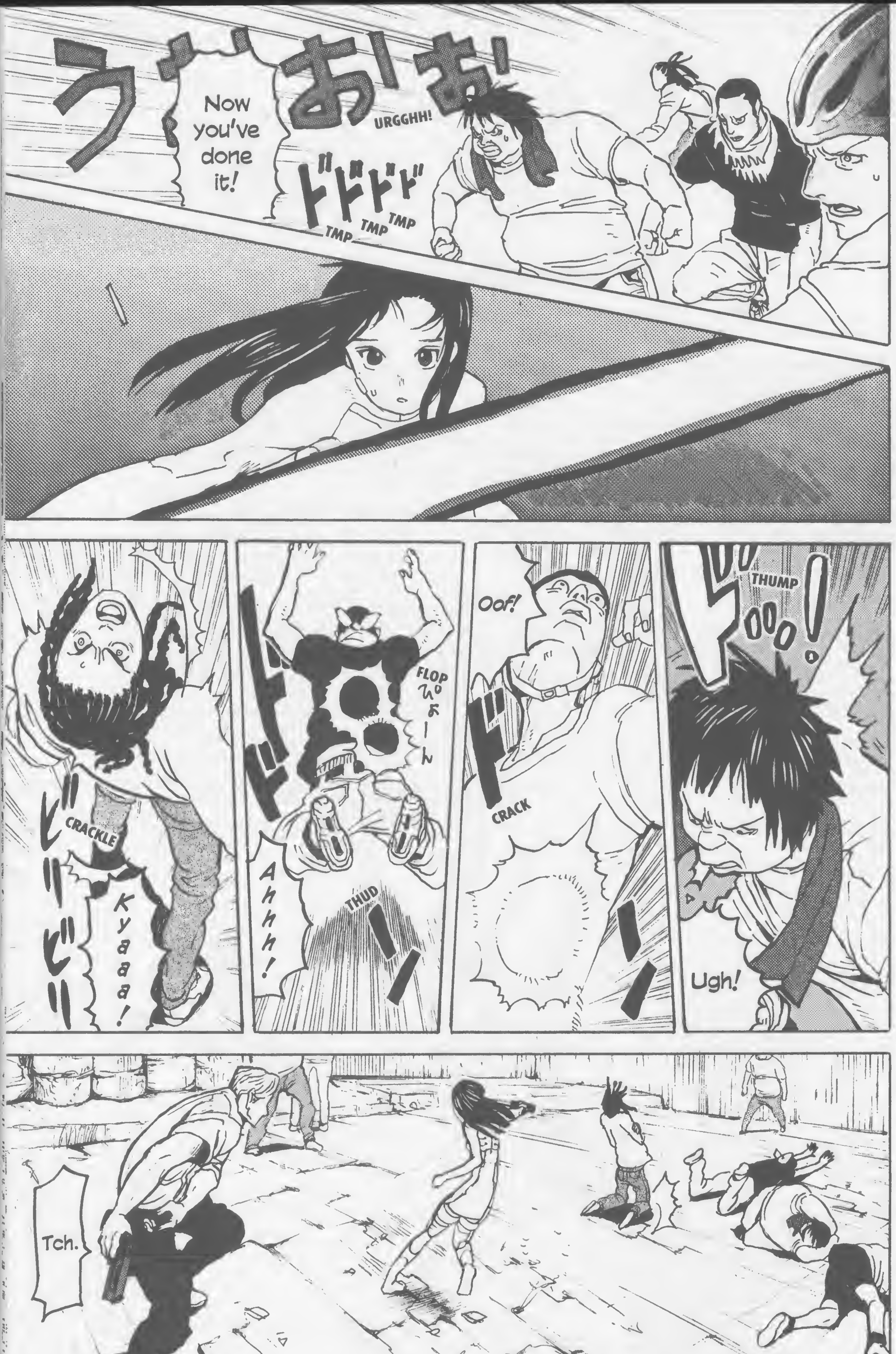

"I did it!"
PHEW
Good job, Balot!
See how powerful you are?
キュルルル
SPIN
Here they come!

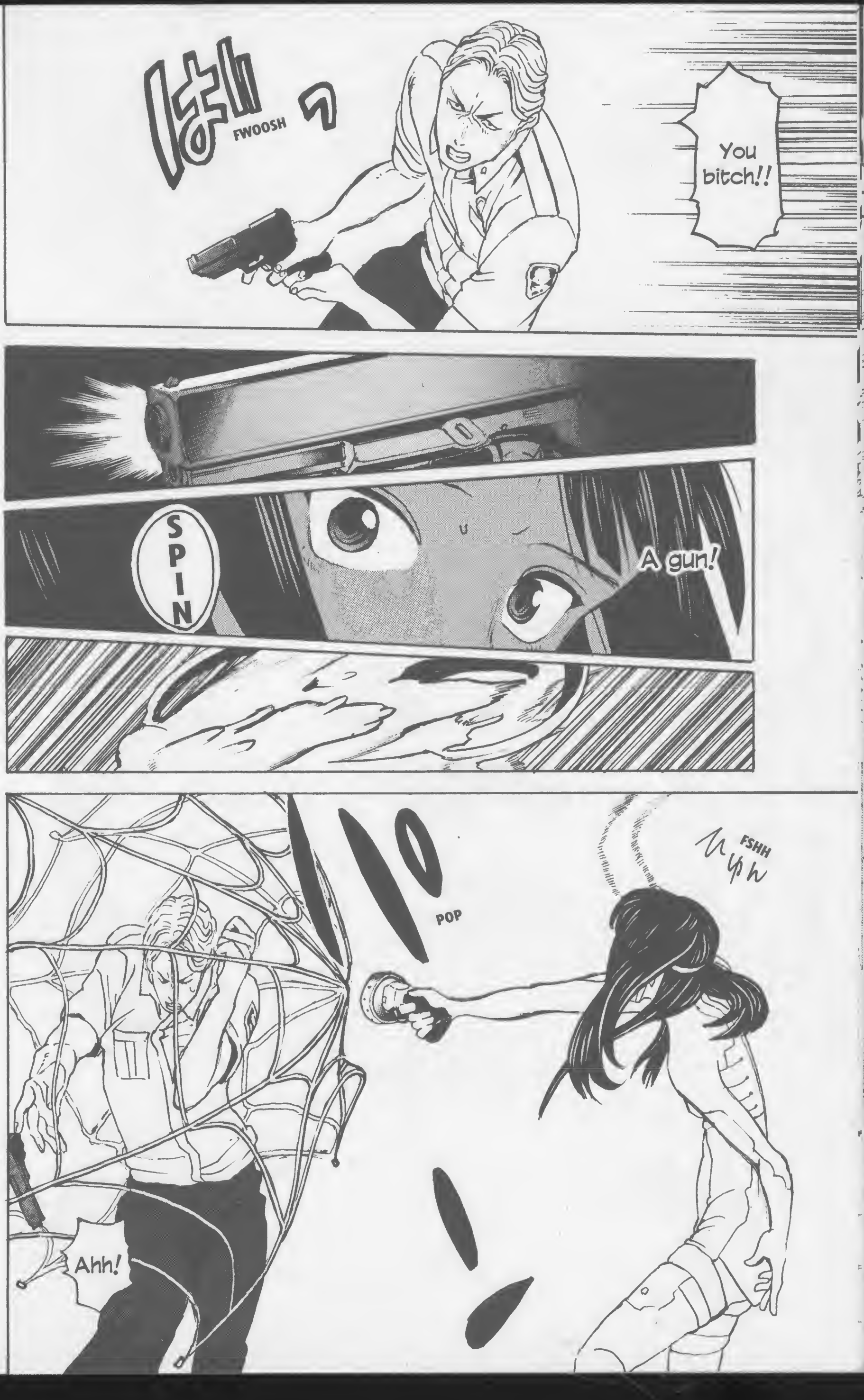

Move!
Ah!
Oof!
ヒュン
FWOOSH
Move!
ブウ
SWISH
Move!

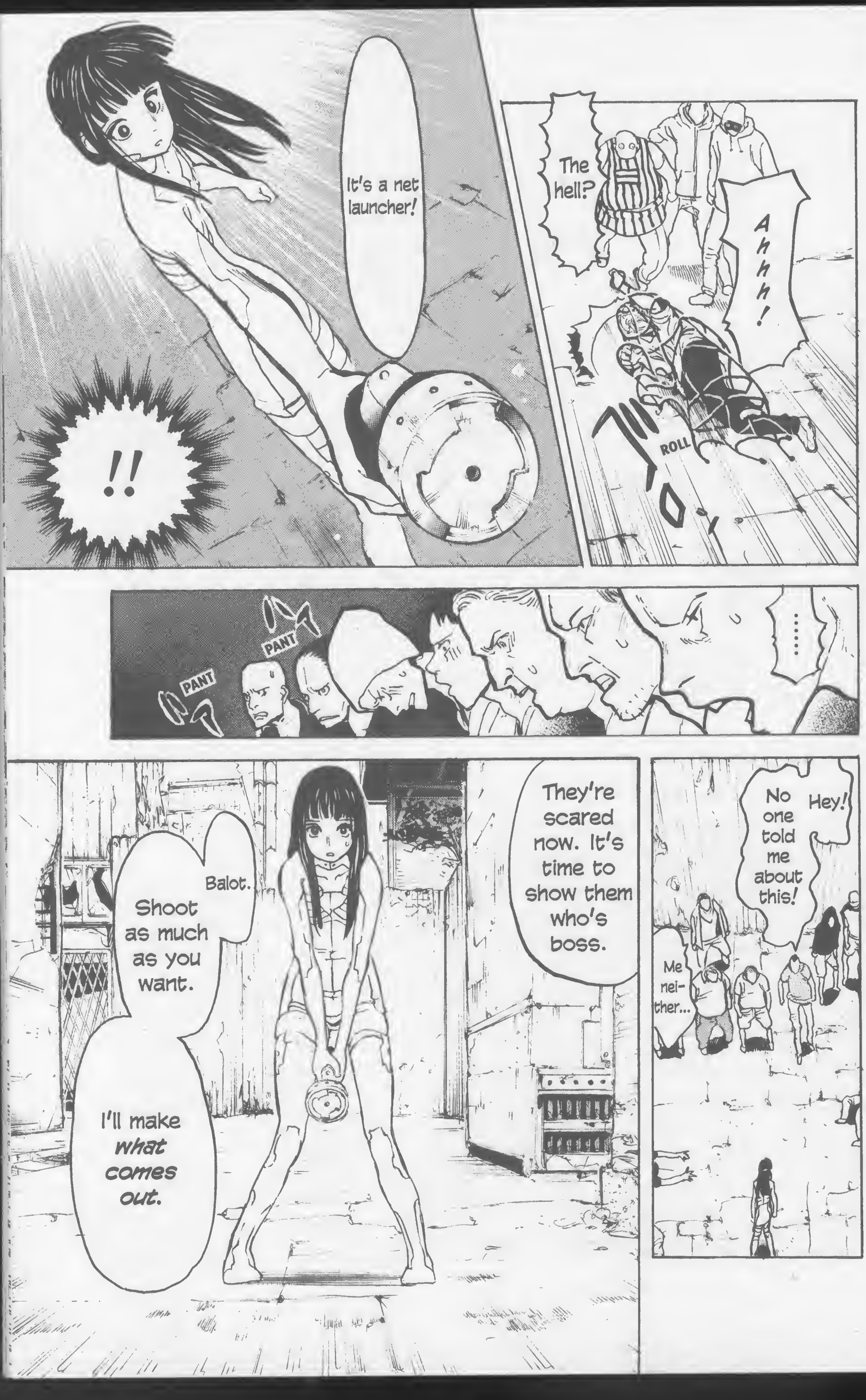

GRRRRRR
Why can't I hit her?!
There's not a scratch on her!
"This is my power?!"
The fight won't end just by dodging. Now it's time to shut them up.
"Shut them up?"
When they come for you, just thrust your right hand out.
"My right hand?"

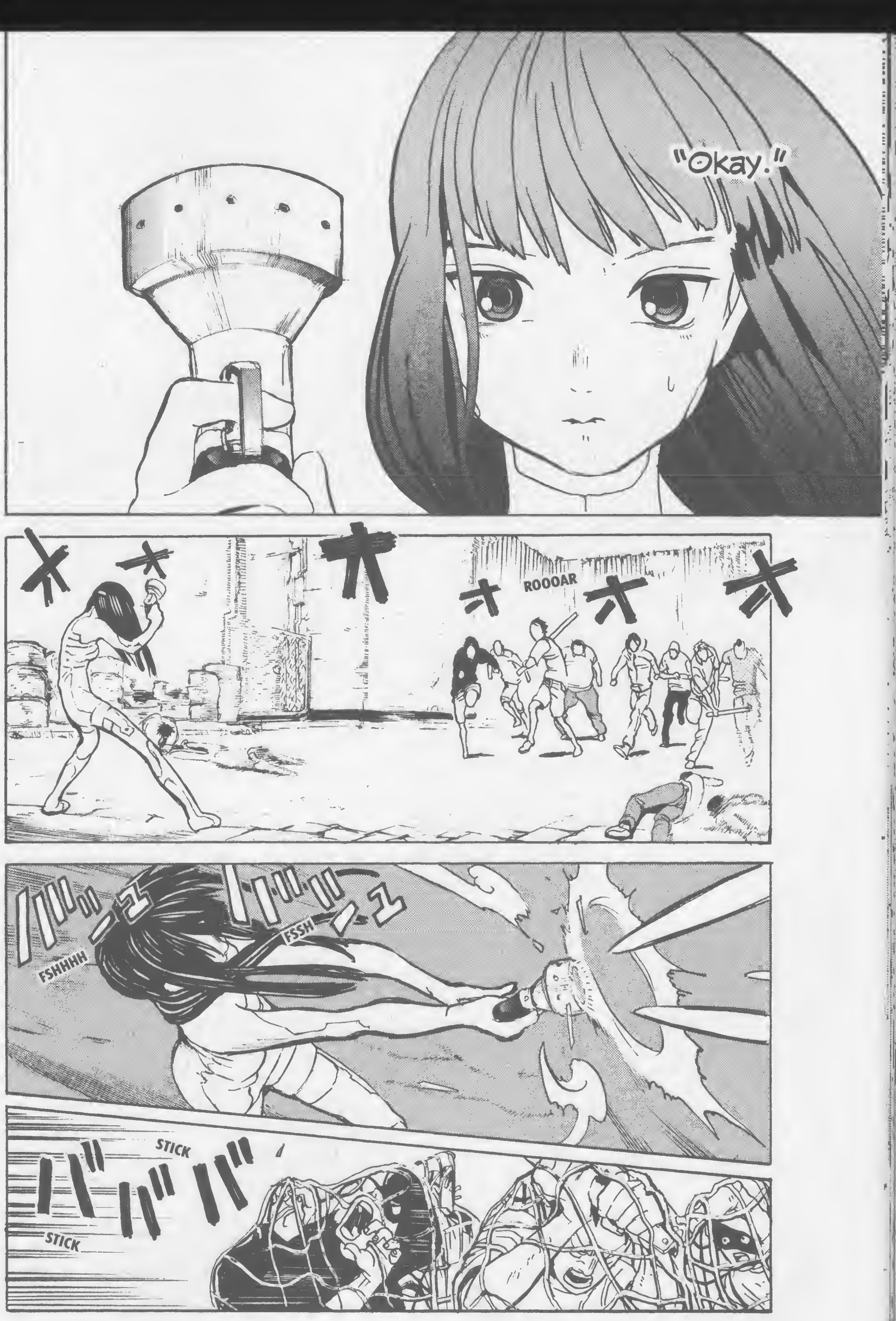

TMP TMP
!!
Now, Balot!
!!
CRACK
Ughhh
gaaaah!
CRACKLE

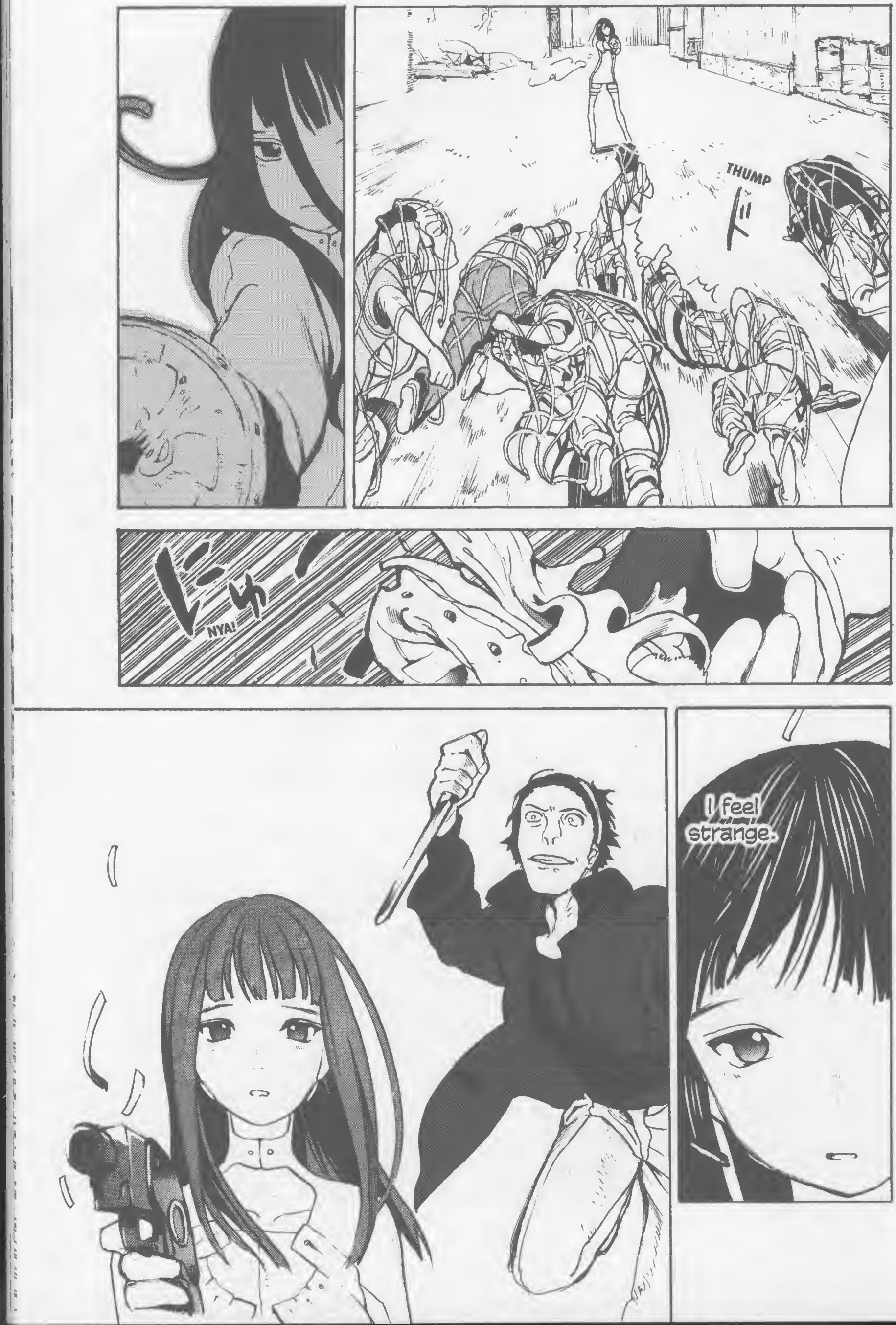

Where'd that weapon come from?
He's convulsing!
TWITCH
TWITCH
"Œufcoque!"
It's okay. Just knocked him unconscious with an electric shock.
You bitch!
Get over here!
Behind you!
ひゅん
SPIN
THWACK
CRACKLE

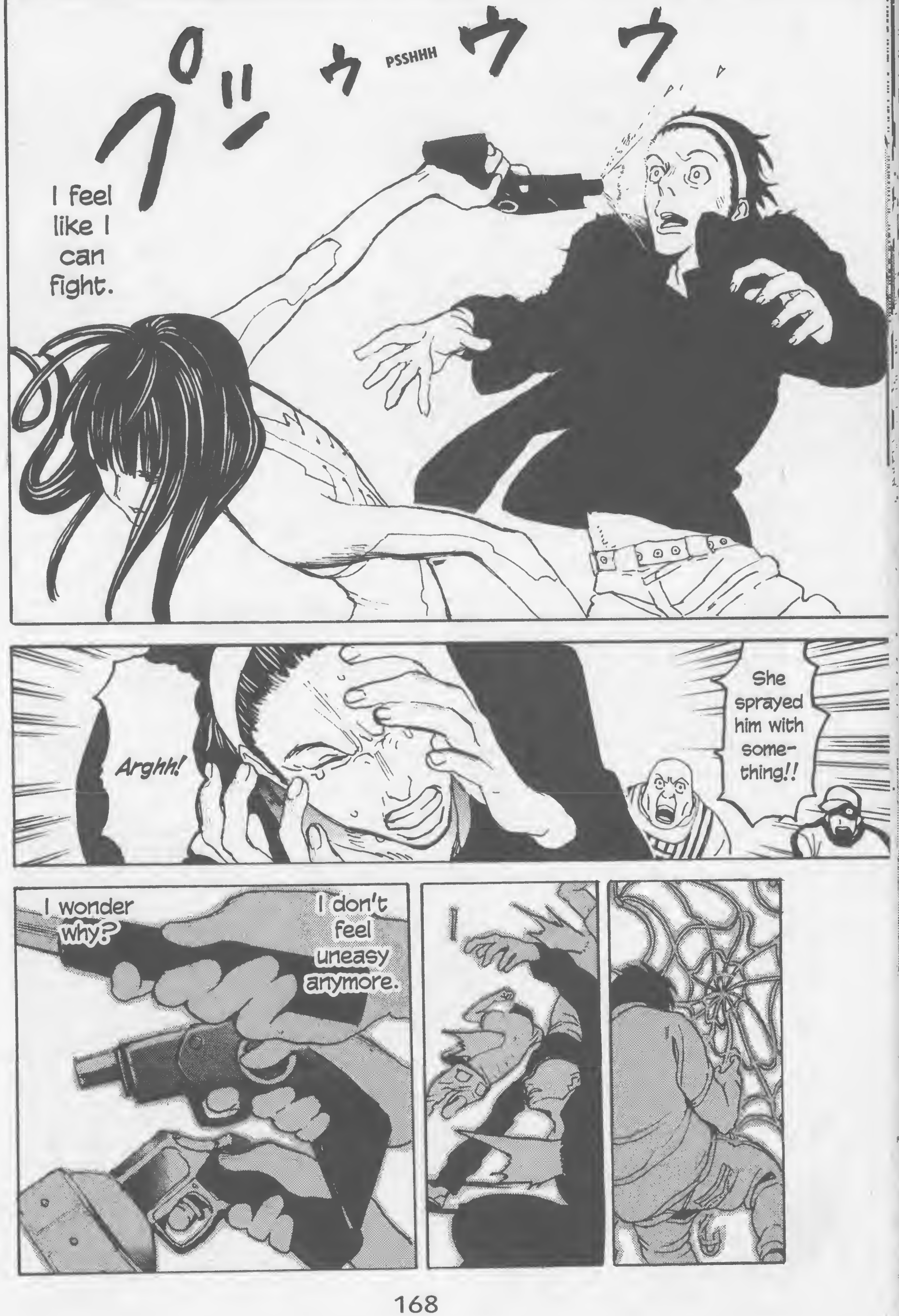

URGGHH!
Now you've done it!
ドドドド
TMP
TMP
TMP
THUMP
Ugh!
Oof!
CRACK
FLOP
Ahhh!
THUD
CRACKLE
Kyaaa!
Tch.

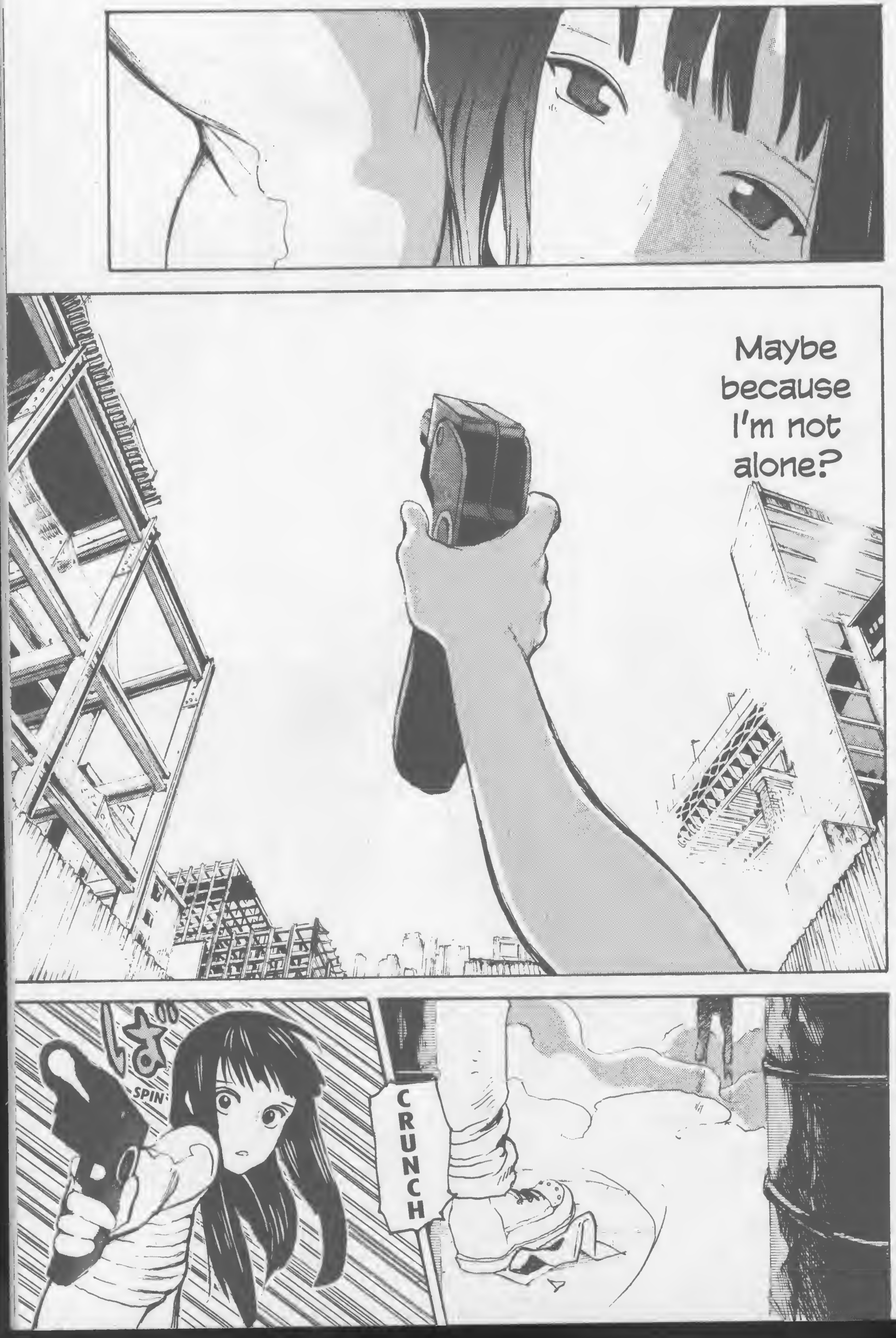

FWOOSH
You bitch!!
SPIN
A gun!
POP
FSHH
Ahh!

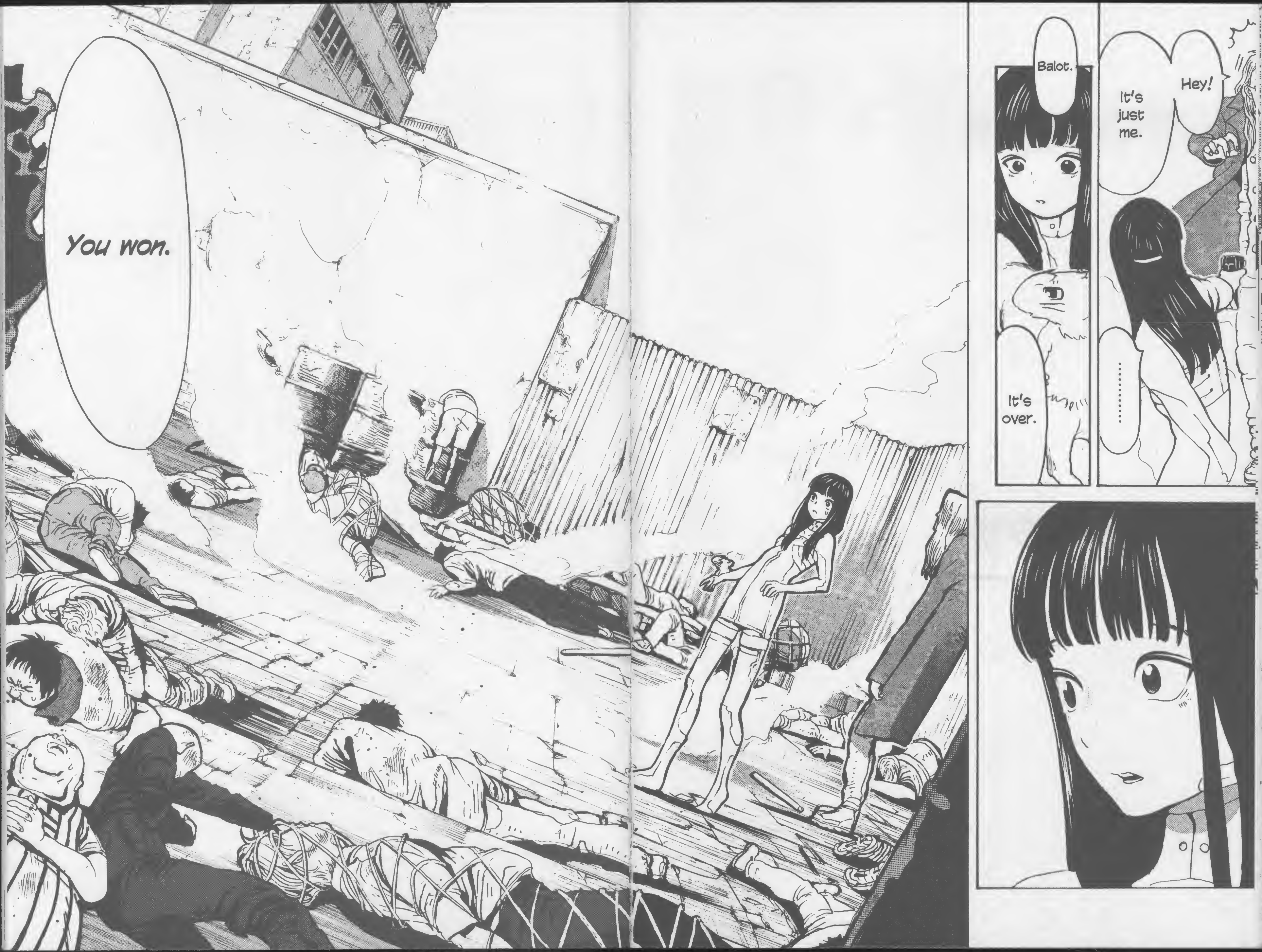

The hell?
Ahhhh!
ROLL
It's a net launcher!
!!
......
PANT
PANT
Hey!
No one told me about this!
Me neither...
They're scared now. It's time to show them who's boss.
Balot.
Shoot as much as you want.
I'll make *what comes out.*

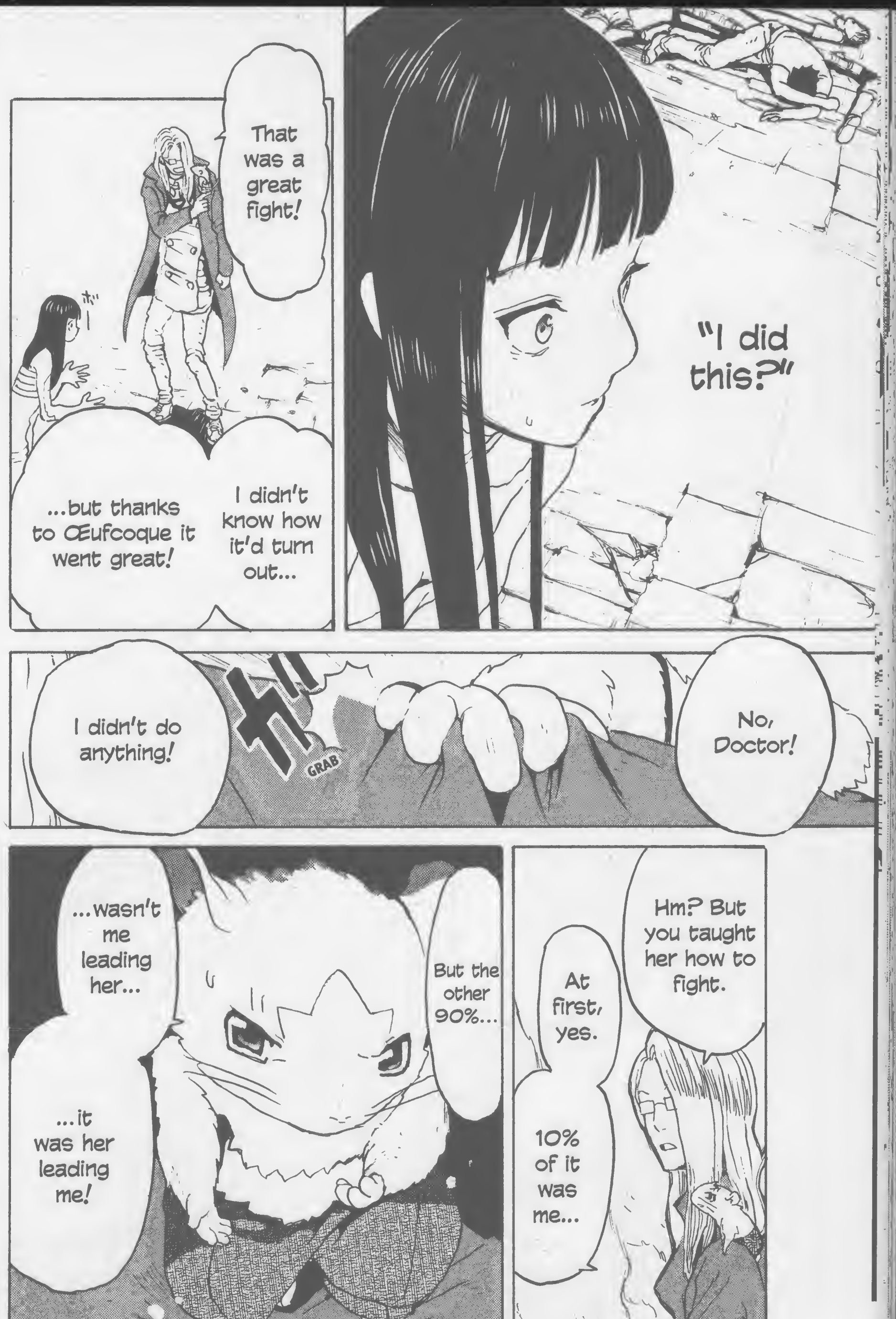

"Okay."
オオオオオオ
ROOOAR
バシューー
バシュー
FSHHHH
FSSH
バババ
STICK
STICK

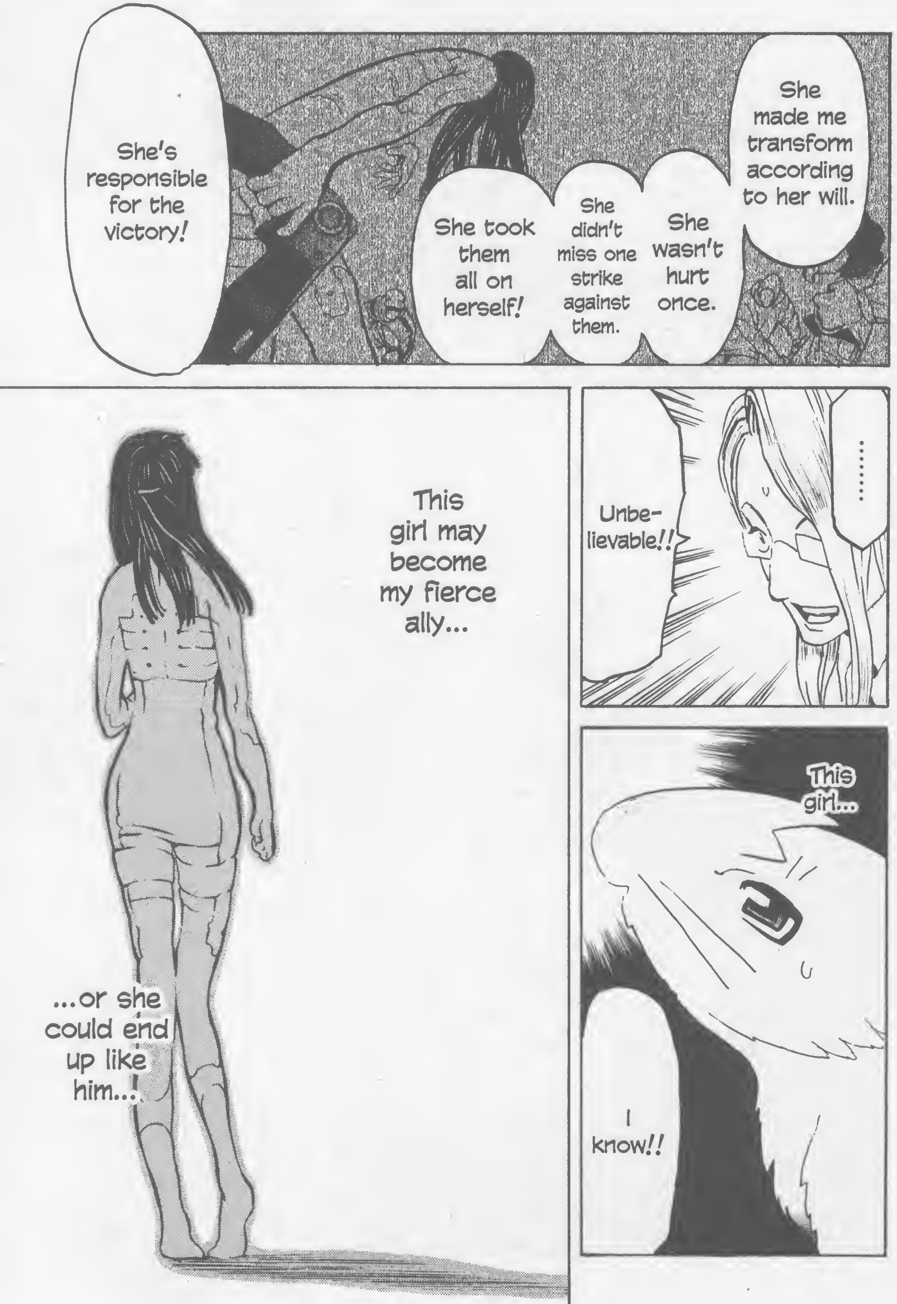

THUMP
ド
にゅ
NYA!
I feel strange.

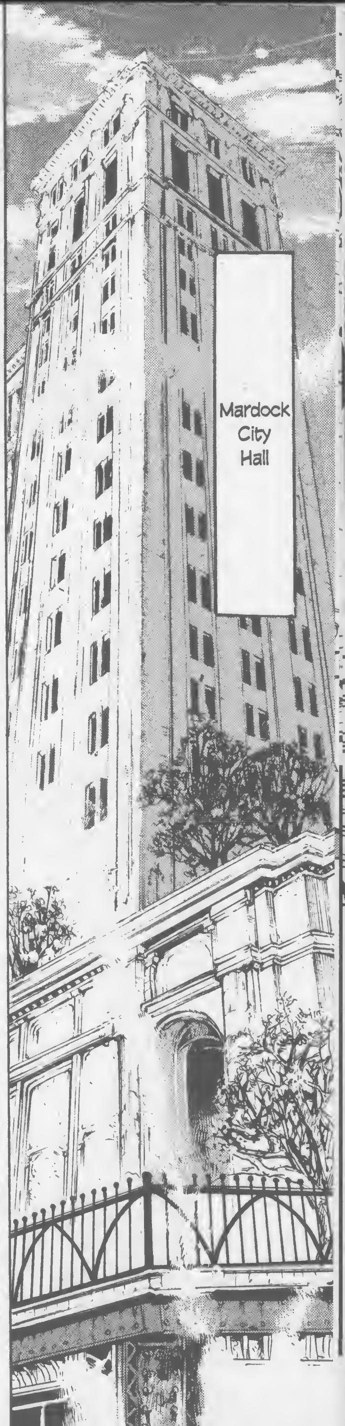

ブシュウウウ
PSSHHH
I feel like I can fight.
She sprayed him with something!!
Arghh!
I don't feel uneasy anymore.
I wonder why?

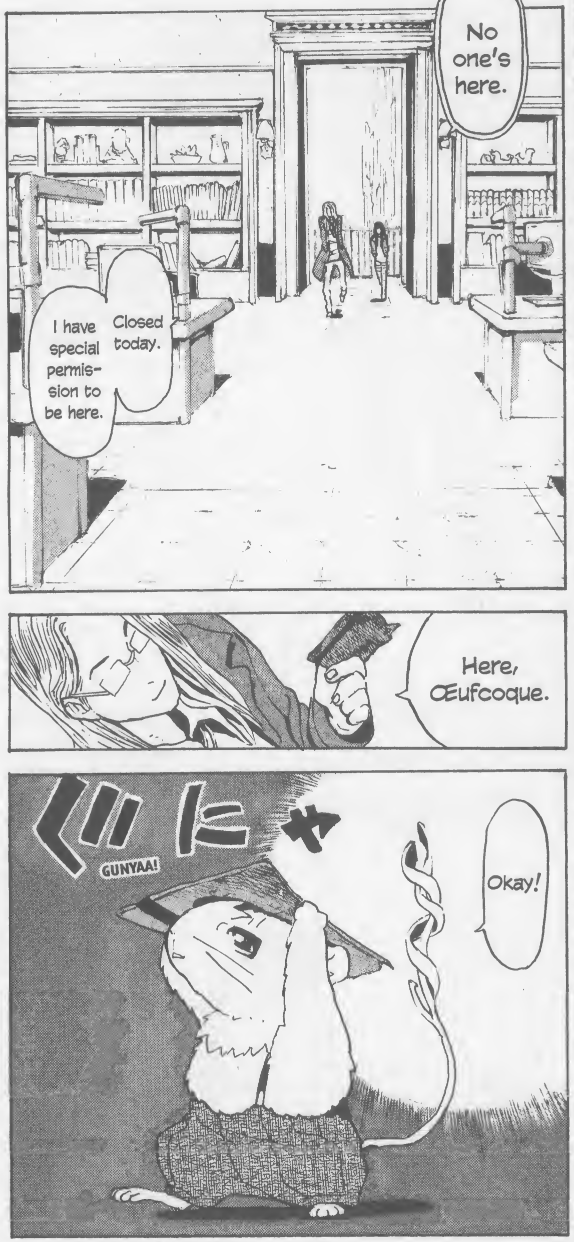

Maybe because I'm not alone?
しず
SPIN
CRUNCH

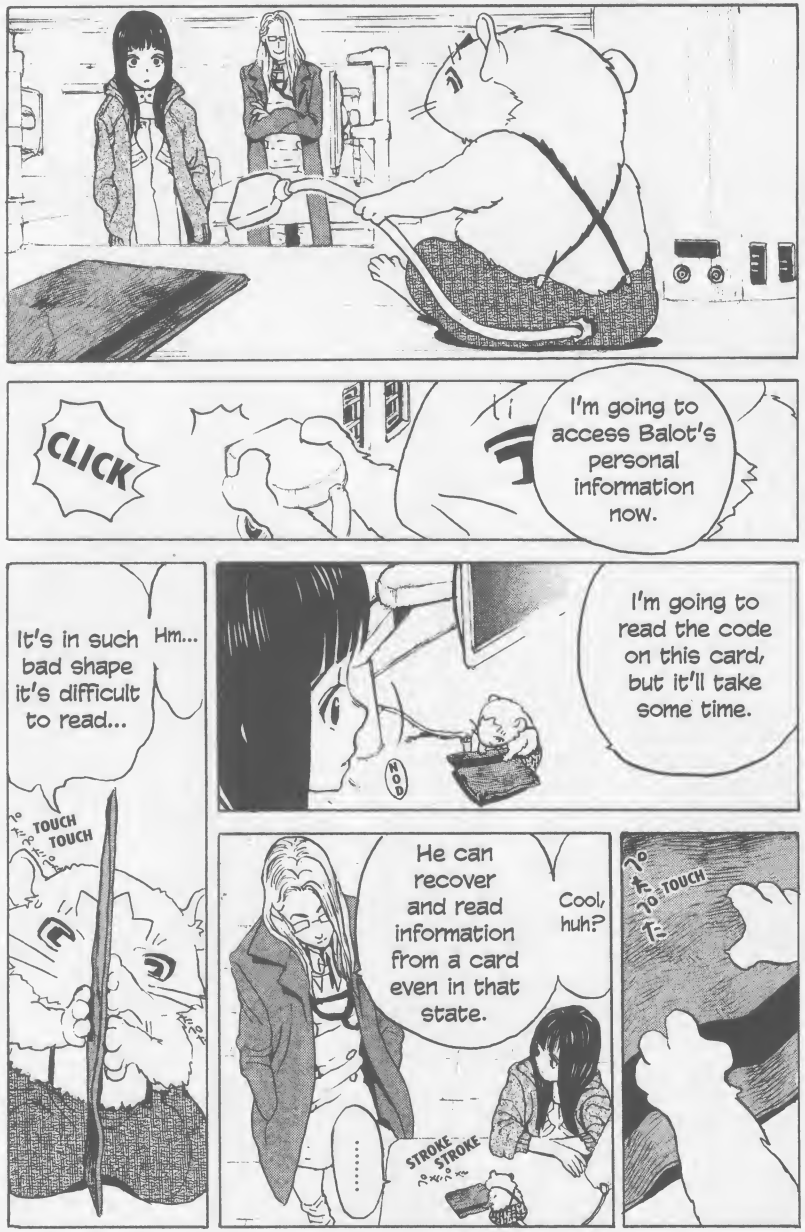

Hey!
It's just me.
......
Balot.
It's over.
You won.

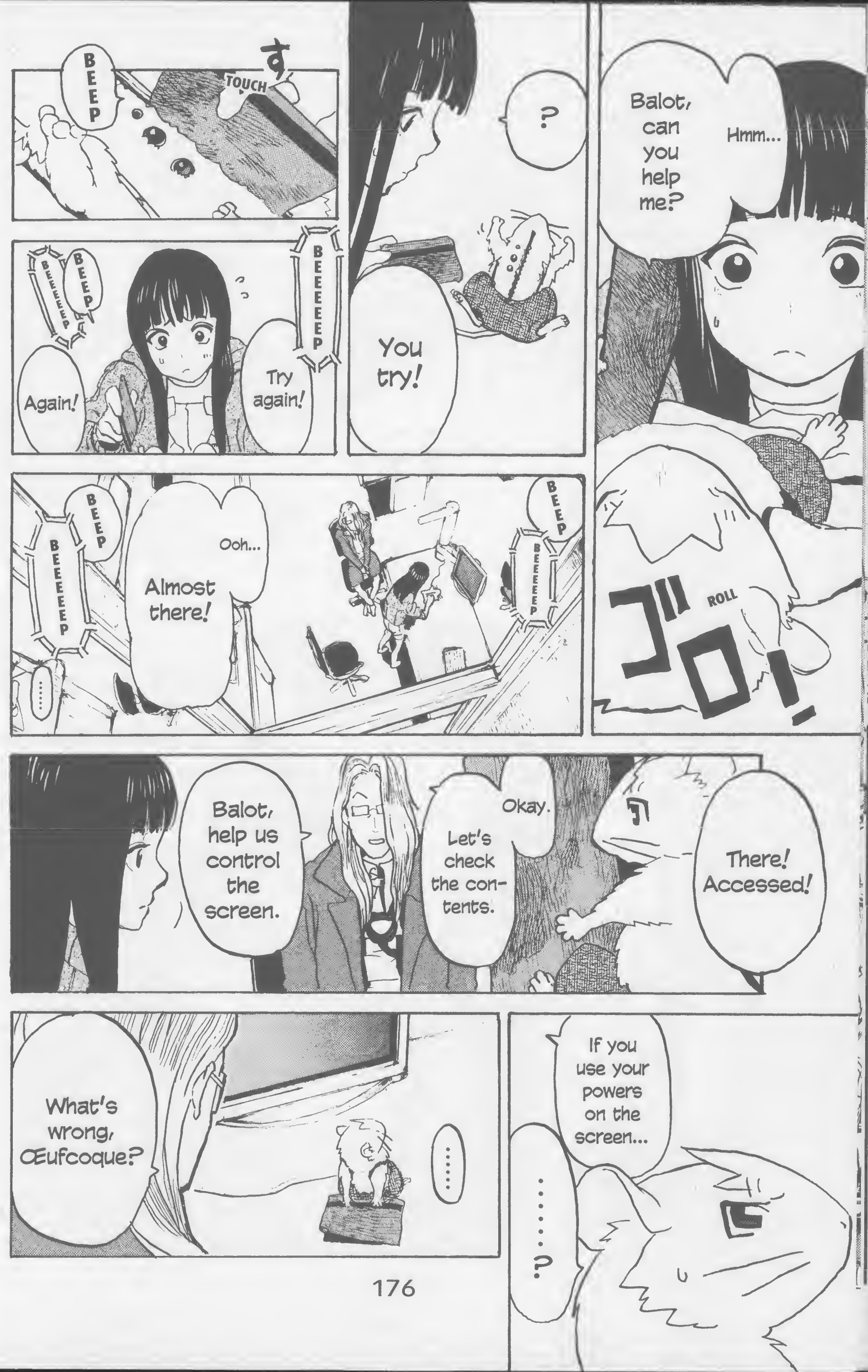

"I did this?"
That was a great fight!
I didn't know how it'd turn out...
...but thanks to Œufcoque it went great!
No, Doctor!
GRAB
I didn't do anything!
Hm? But you taught her how to fight.
At first, yes.
10% of it was me...
But the other 90%...
...wasn't me leading her...
...it was her leading me!

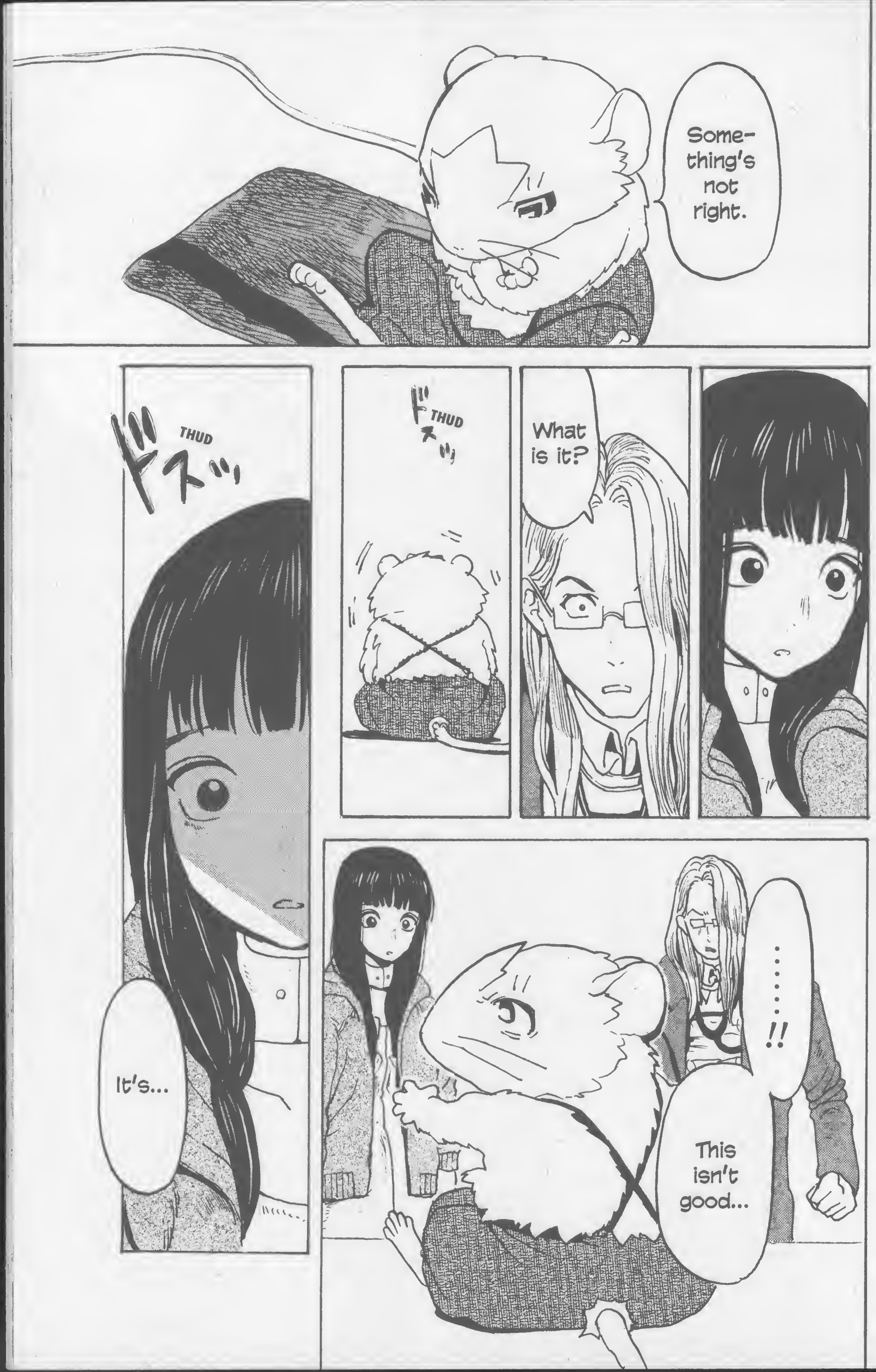

She made me transform according to her will.
She wasn't hurt once.
She didn't miss one strike against them.
She took them all on herself!
She's responsible for the victory!
....
Unbelievable!!
This girl...
I know!!
This girl may become my fierce ally...
...or she could end up like him...

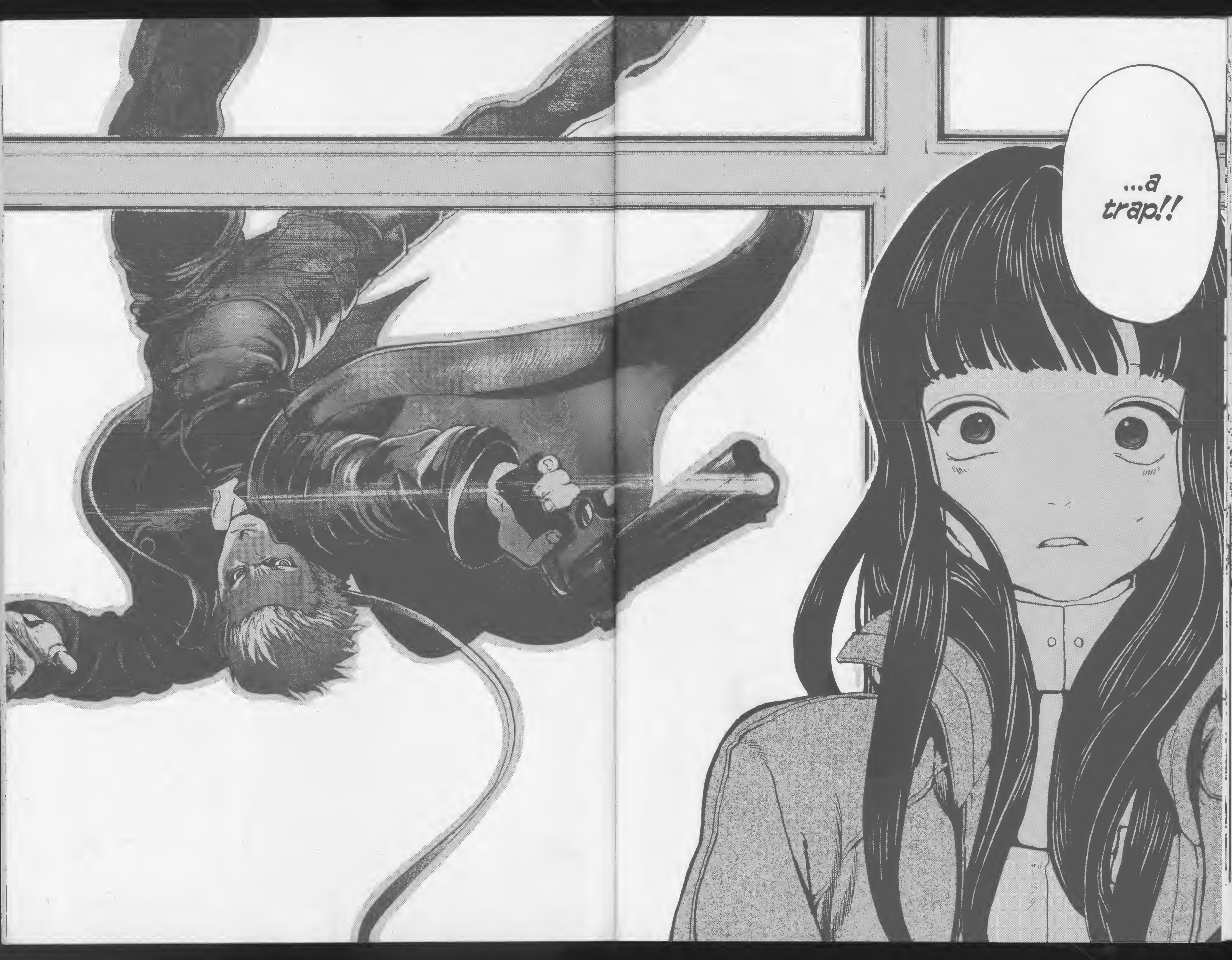

Mardock City Hall

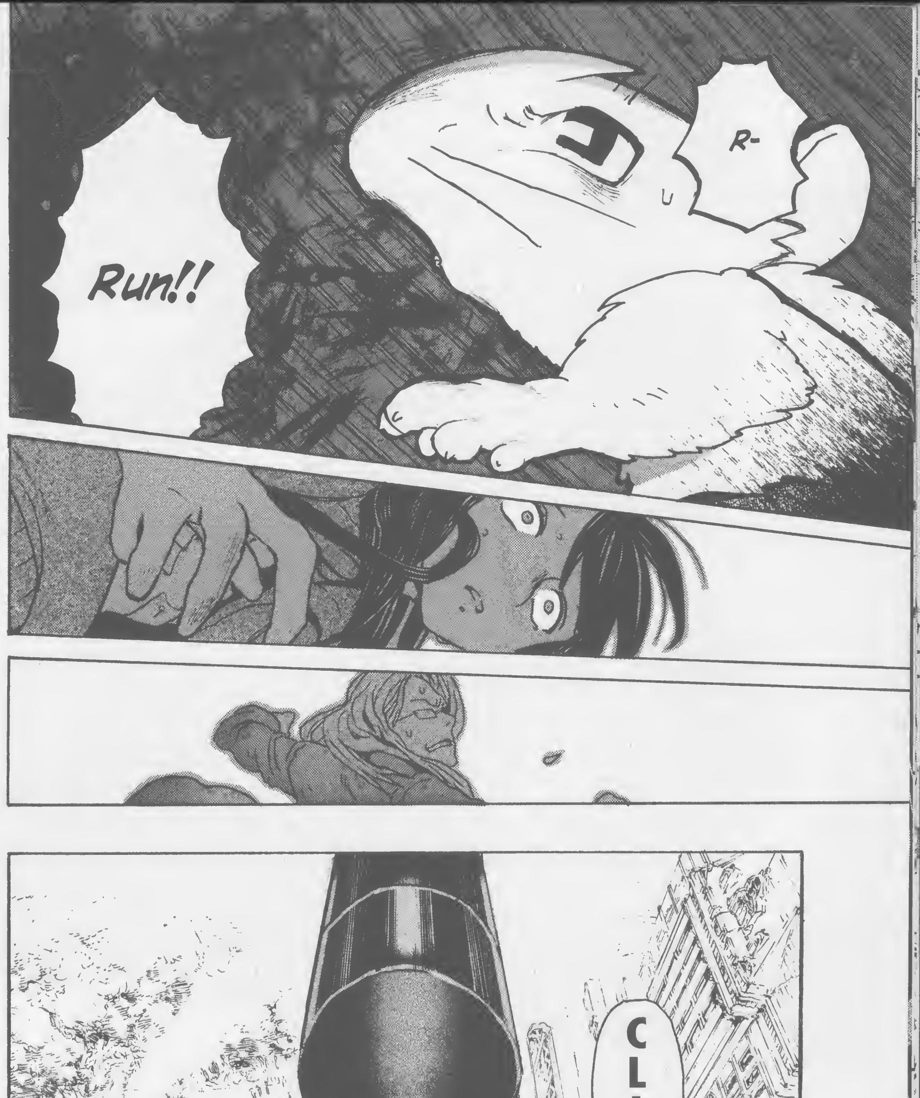

No one's here.
Closed today.
I have special permission to be here.
Here, Œufcoque.
Okay!
ぐにゃ
GUNYAA!

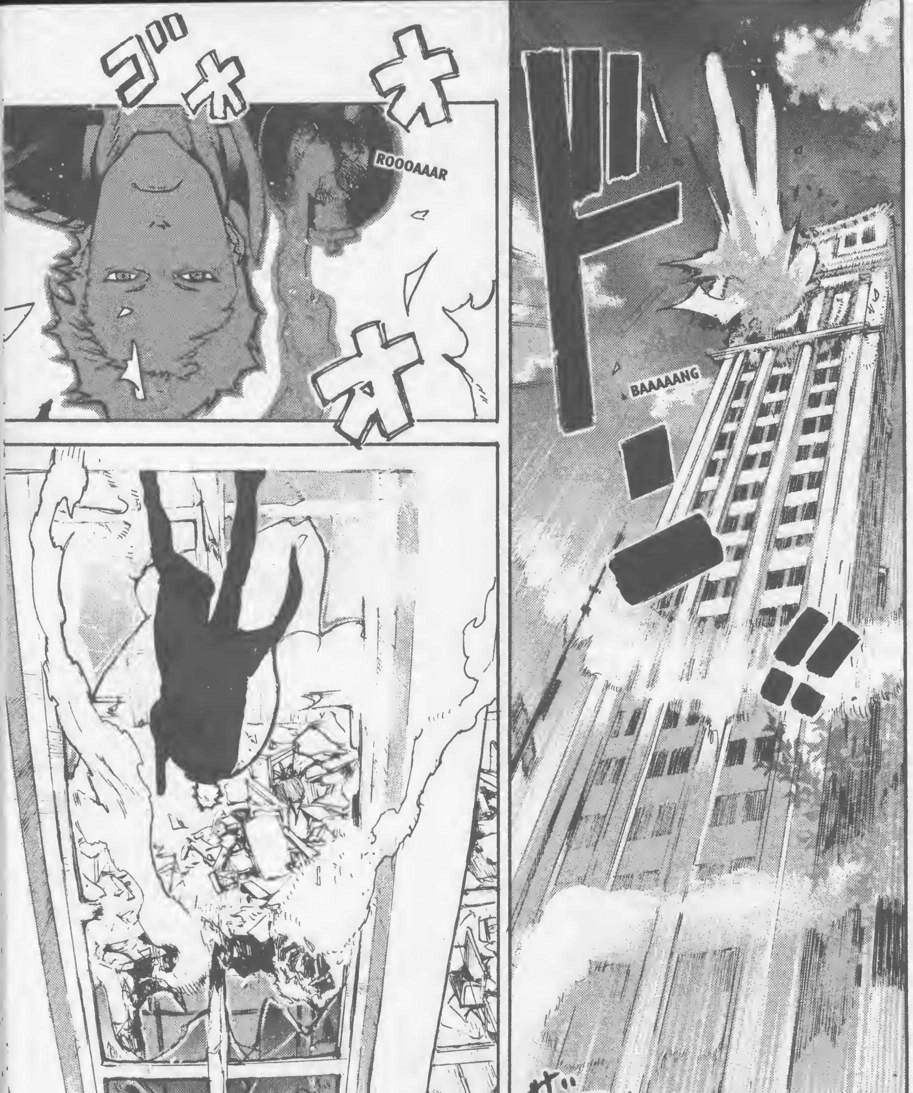

I'm going to access Balot's personal information now.
CLICK
I'm going to read the code on this card, but it'll take some time.
NOD
Hm...
It's in such bad shape it's difficult to read...
TOUCH TOUCH
TOUCH
Cool, huh?
He can recover and read information from a card even in that state.
STROKE STROKE
......

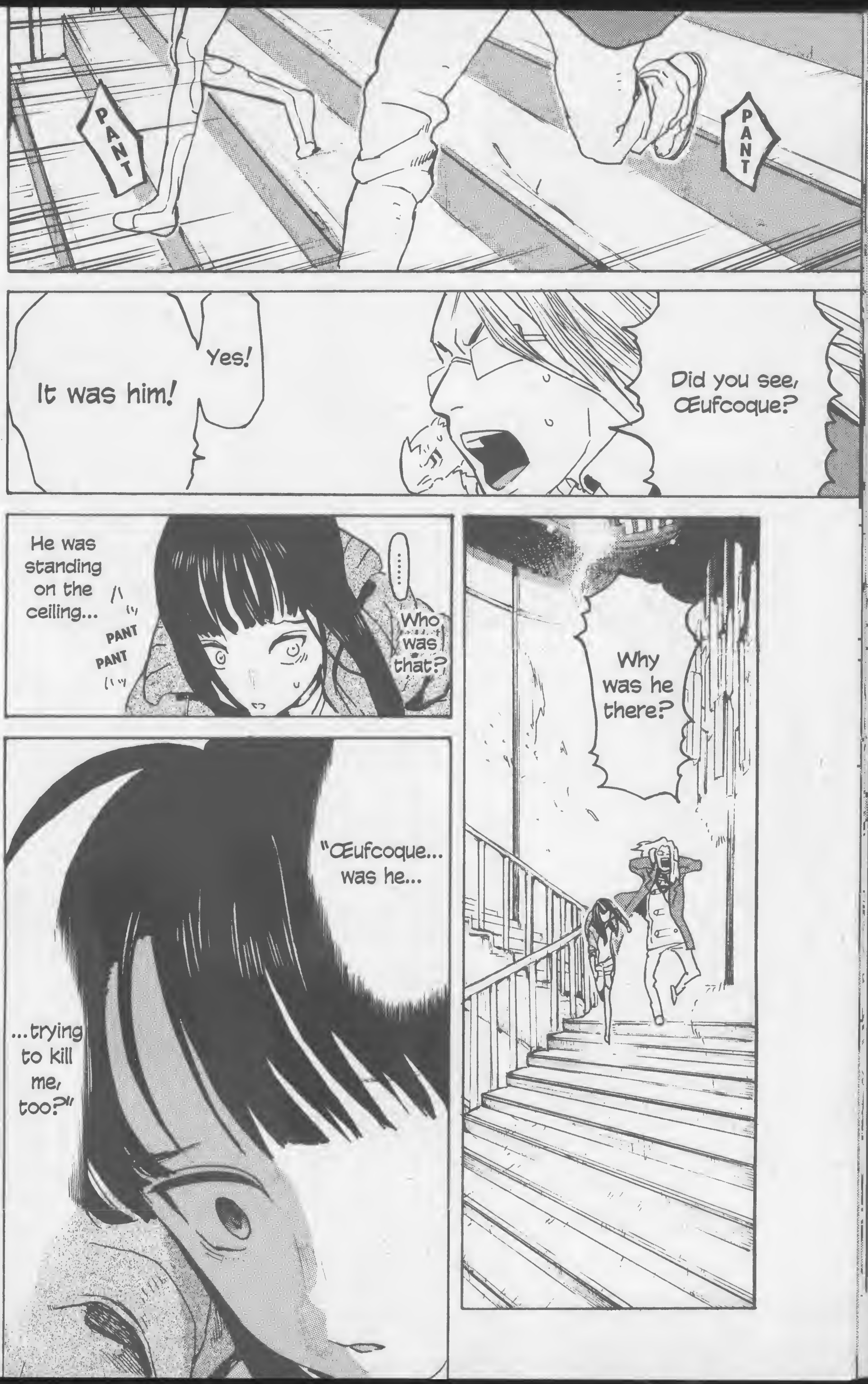

Balot, can you help me?
Hmm...
ゴロ! ROLL
?
You try!
す TOUCH
BEEP
BEEEEEEP
Try again!
BEEP
BEEEEEP
Again!
BEEP
BEEEEEP
Ooh...
Almost there!
BEEP
BEEEEEP
......
There! Accessed!
Okay.
Let's check the contents.
Balot, help us control the screen.
If you use your powers on the screen...
......?
......
What's wrong, Œufcoque?

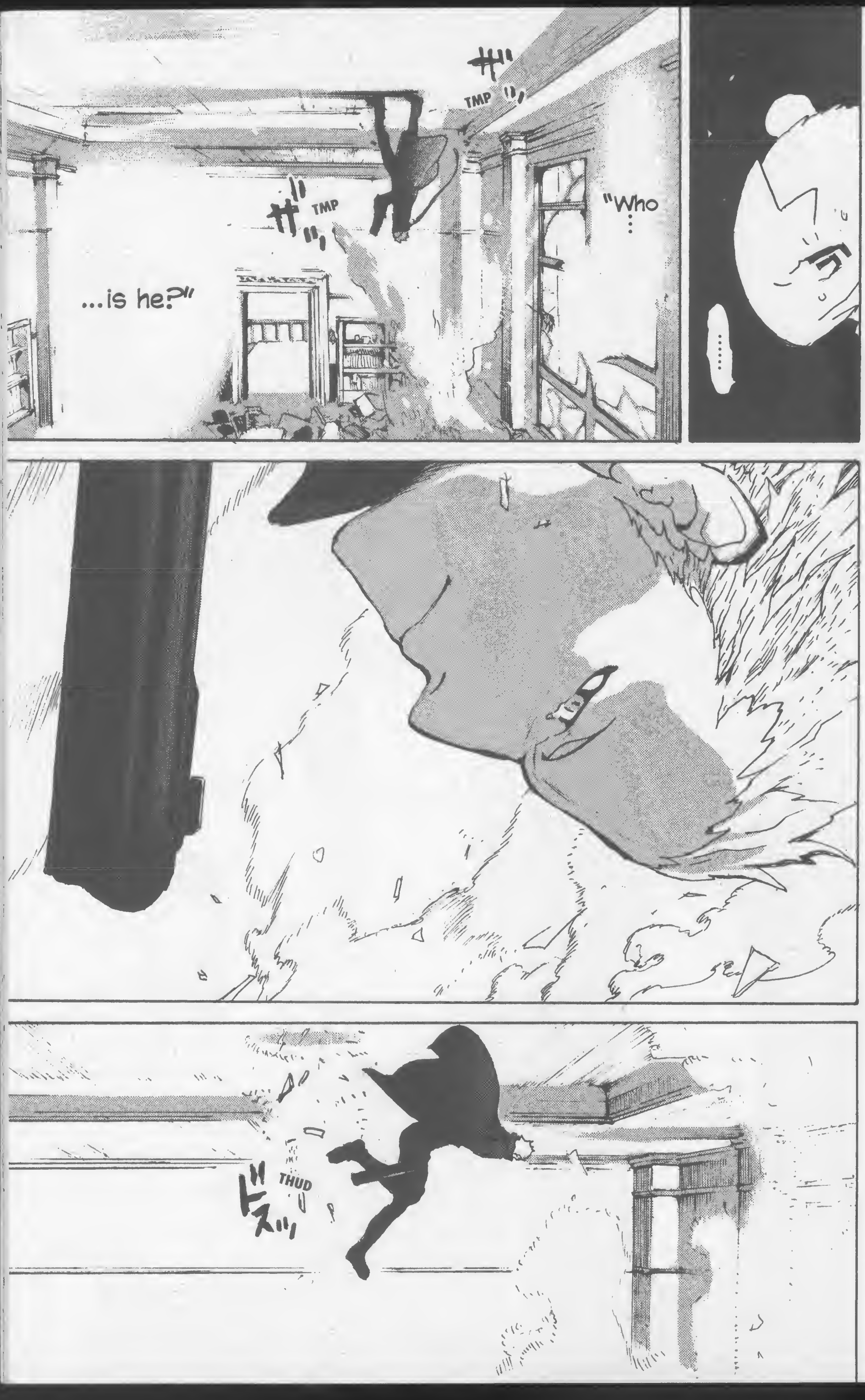

Something's not right.
ドスッ THUD
What is it?
ドスッ THUD
......!!
This isn't good...
It's...


...a trap!!


R-
Run!!
CLICK


ドーー!!
BAAAAANG
ザワ
CHATTER
ゴォオオ
ROOOAAAR


PANT
PANT
Did you see, Œufcoque?
Yes!
It was him!
Why was he there?
......
Who was that?
He was standing on the ceiling...
PANT
PANT
"Œufcoque... was he...
...trying to kill me, too?"


......
"Who...
...is he?"
TMP
TMP
THUD

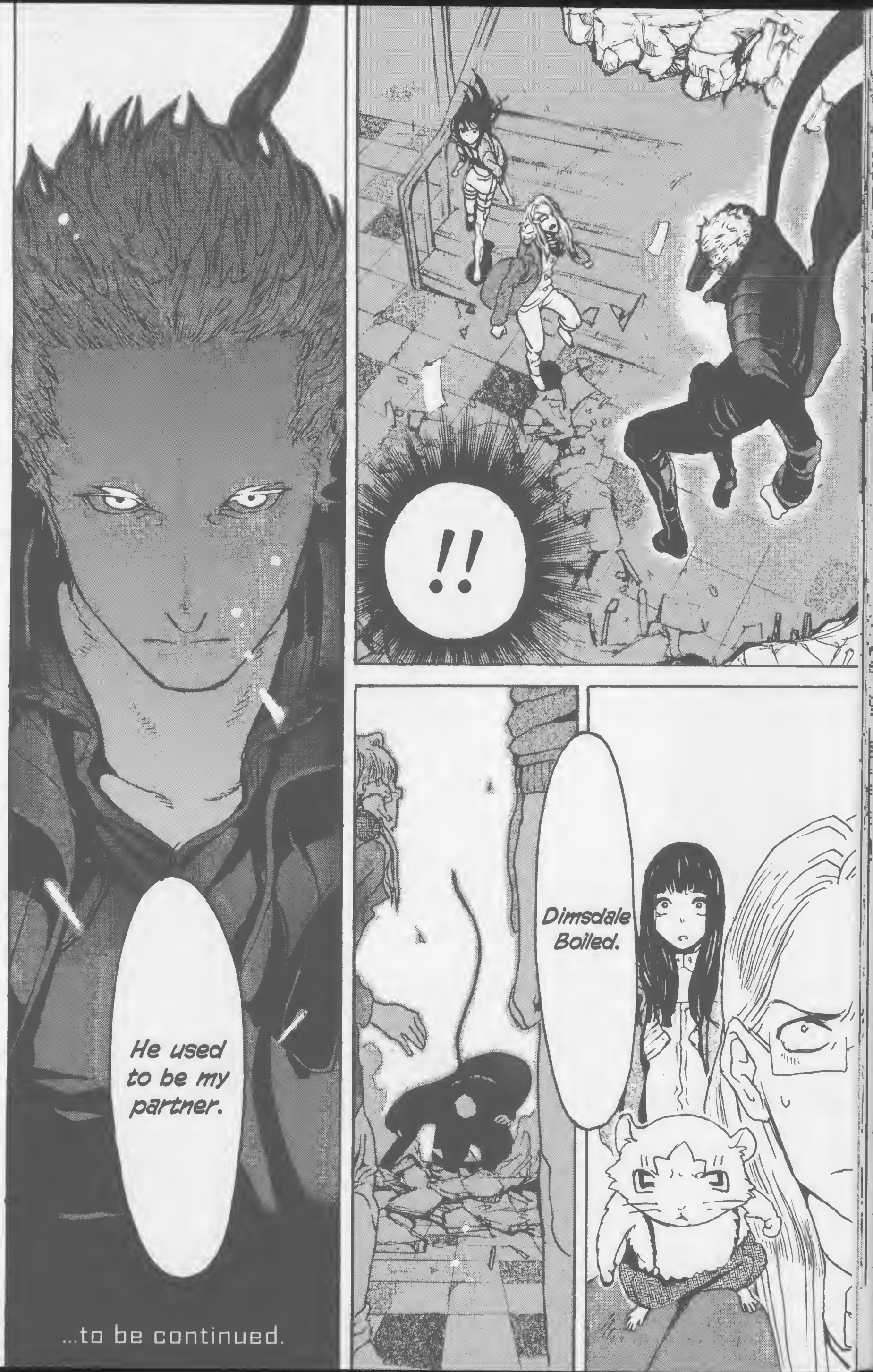
The following pages are a sample I produced in winter 2008 for my first meeting with Tow Ubukata-sensei.

I drew it before it was serialized, so it is the first time I drew "Mardock Scramble."

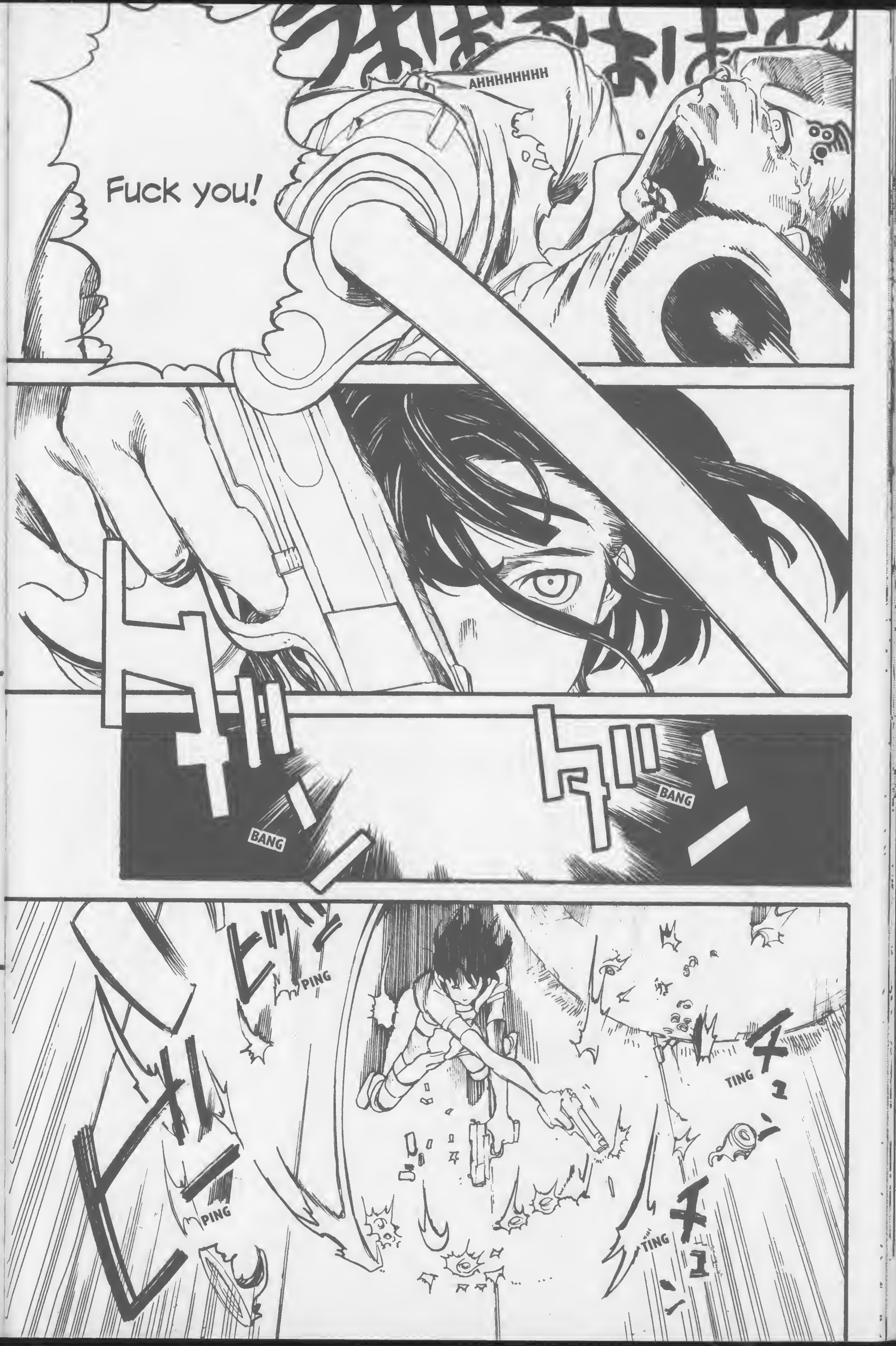
It's a fight scene between Balot and Pussyhand, but you can see just how differently Balot turned out.

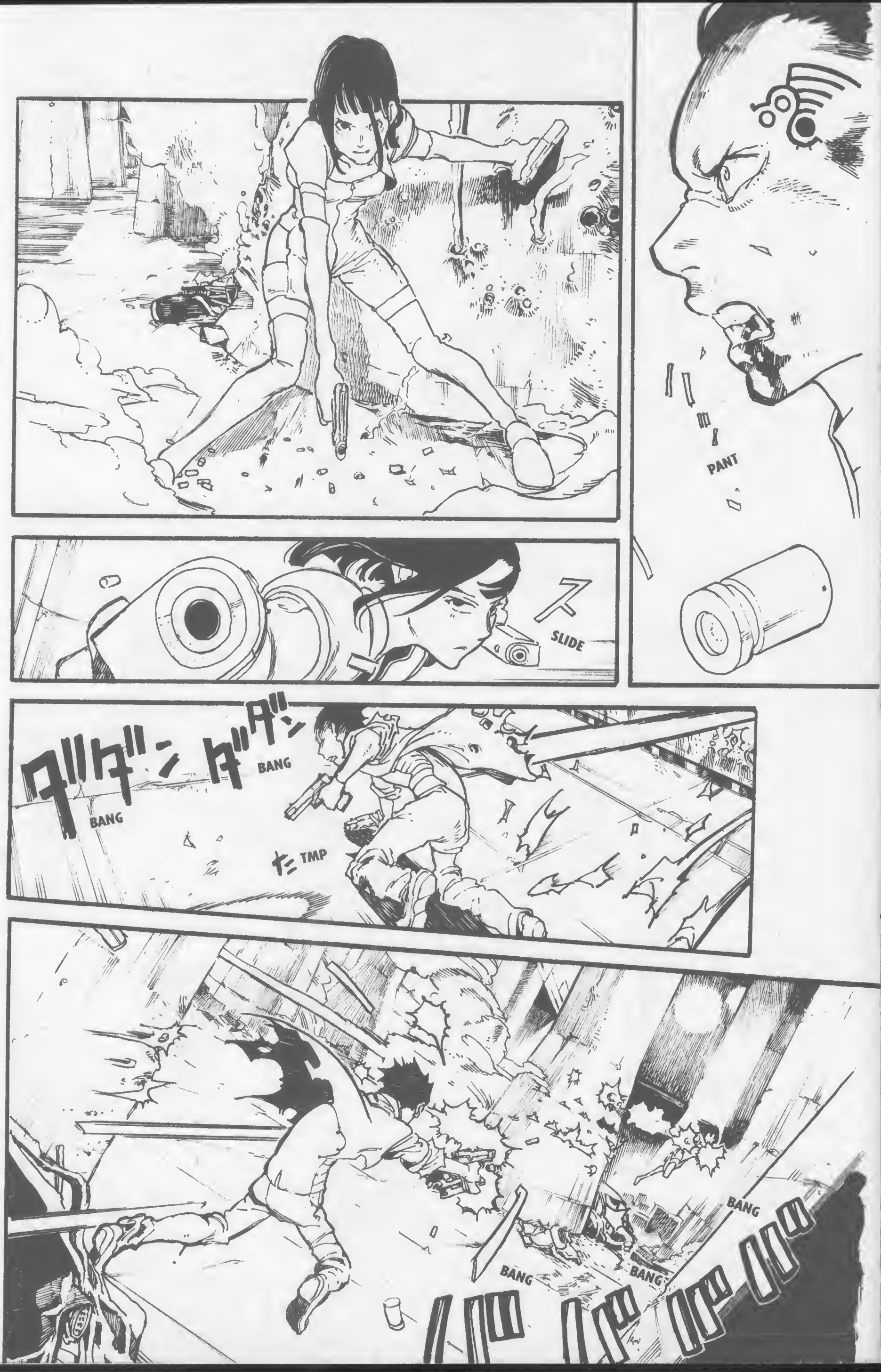
I hope you enjoy reading it.

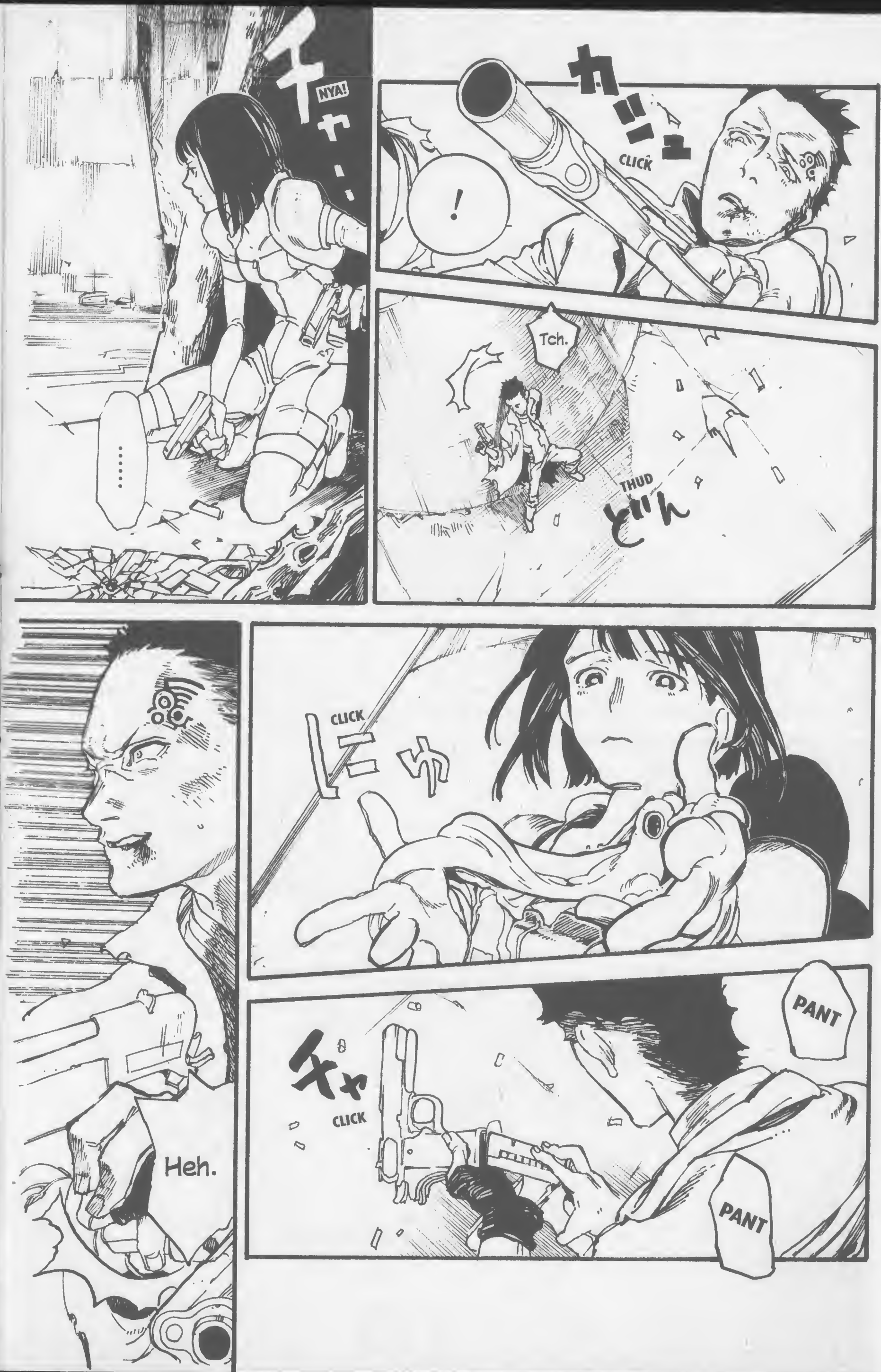
Yoshitoki Oima

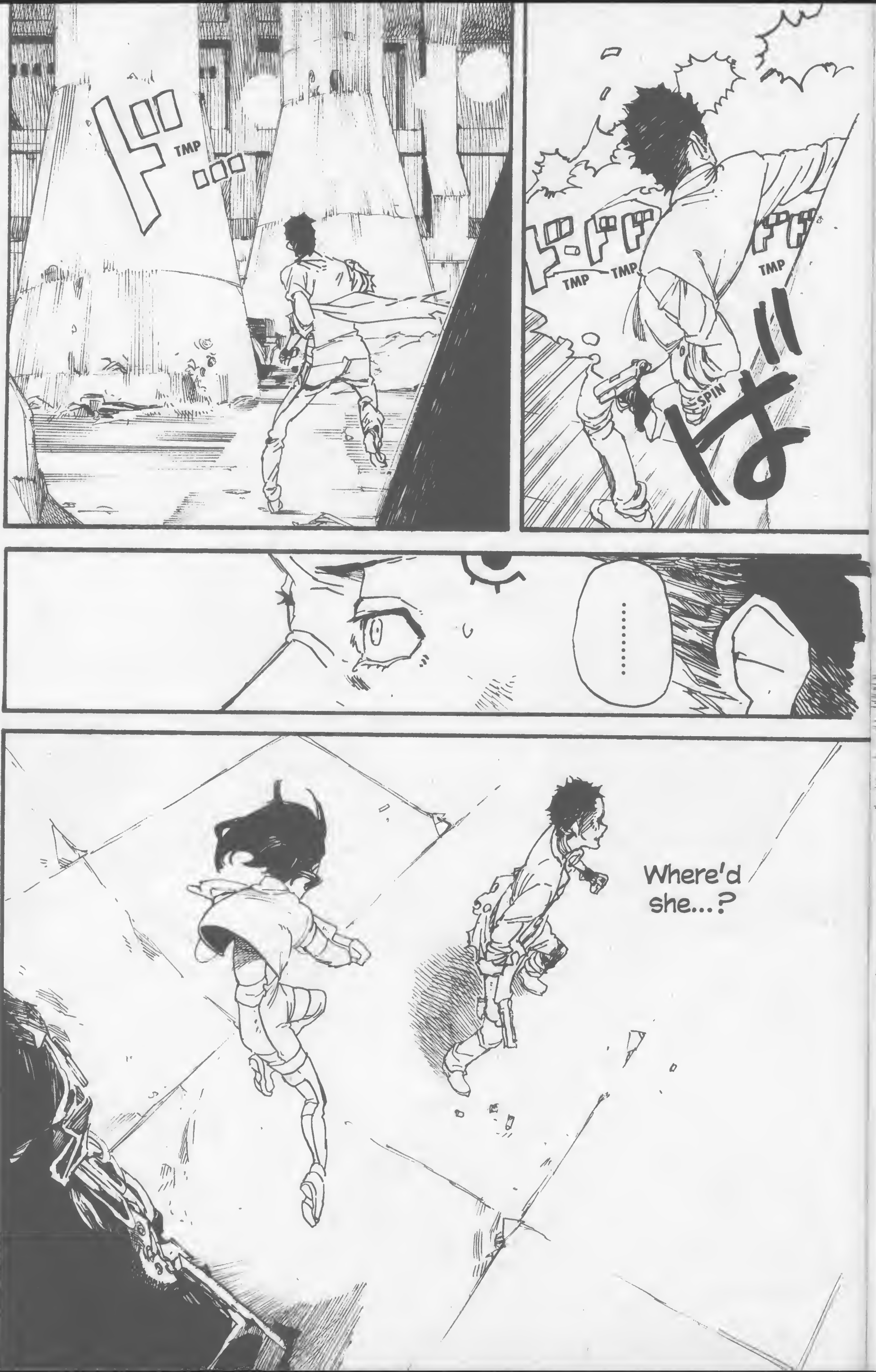

!!
Dimsdale Boiled.
He used to be my partner.

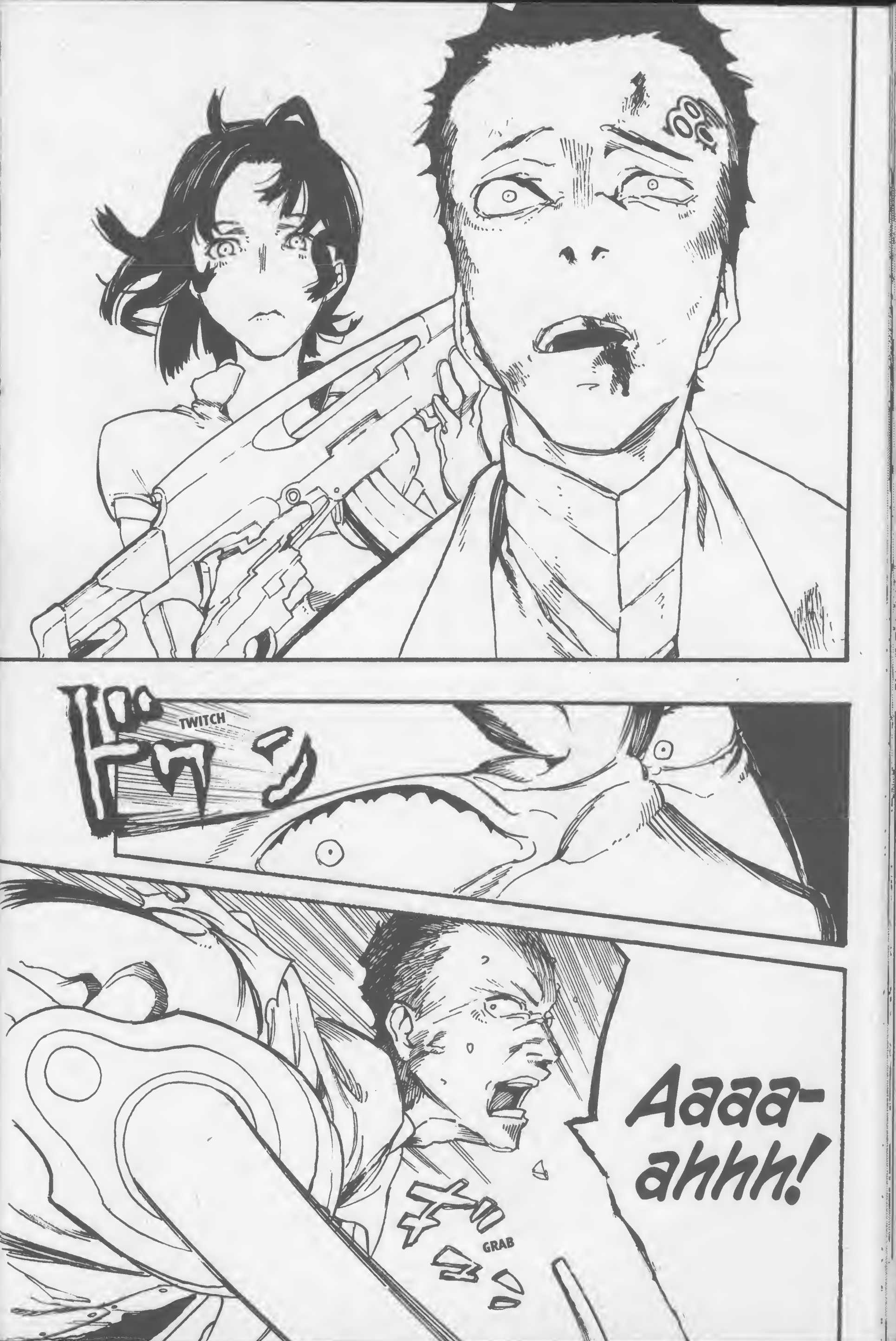
...to be continued.

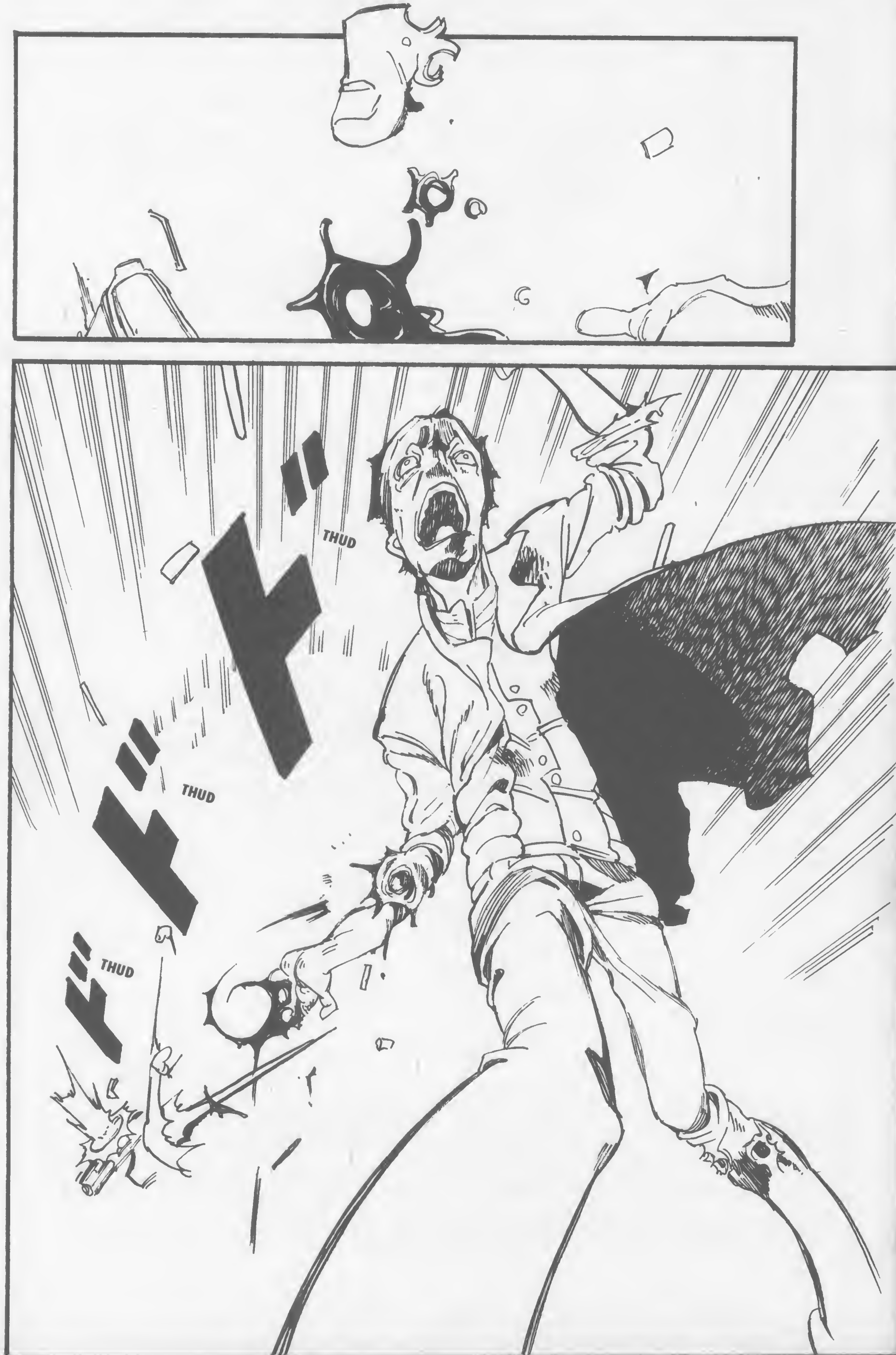

AHHHHHHHH
Fuck you!
BANG
BANG
PING
PING
TING
TING


PANT
ス
SLIDE
BANG
BANG
た TMP
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG


カシュ
CLICK
!
Tch.
どてん
THUD
チャ…
NYA!
……
にゅ
CLICK
PANT
チャ
CLICK
PANT
Heh.


ドドド
TMP TMP
ドド
TMP
ば
SPIN
ドドド
TMP
……
Where'd she...?


TWITCH
ドクン
Aaaa-ahhh!
GRAB


THUD
THUD
THUD